

BASEBALL AND CAPITALISM

RICHARD H. THALER AND CASS R. SUNSTEIN

TWO BOMBS, ONE ENEMY

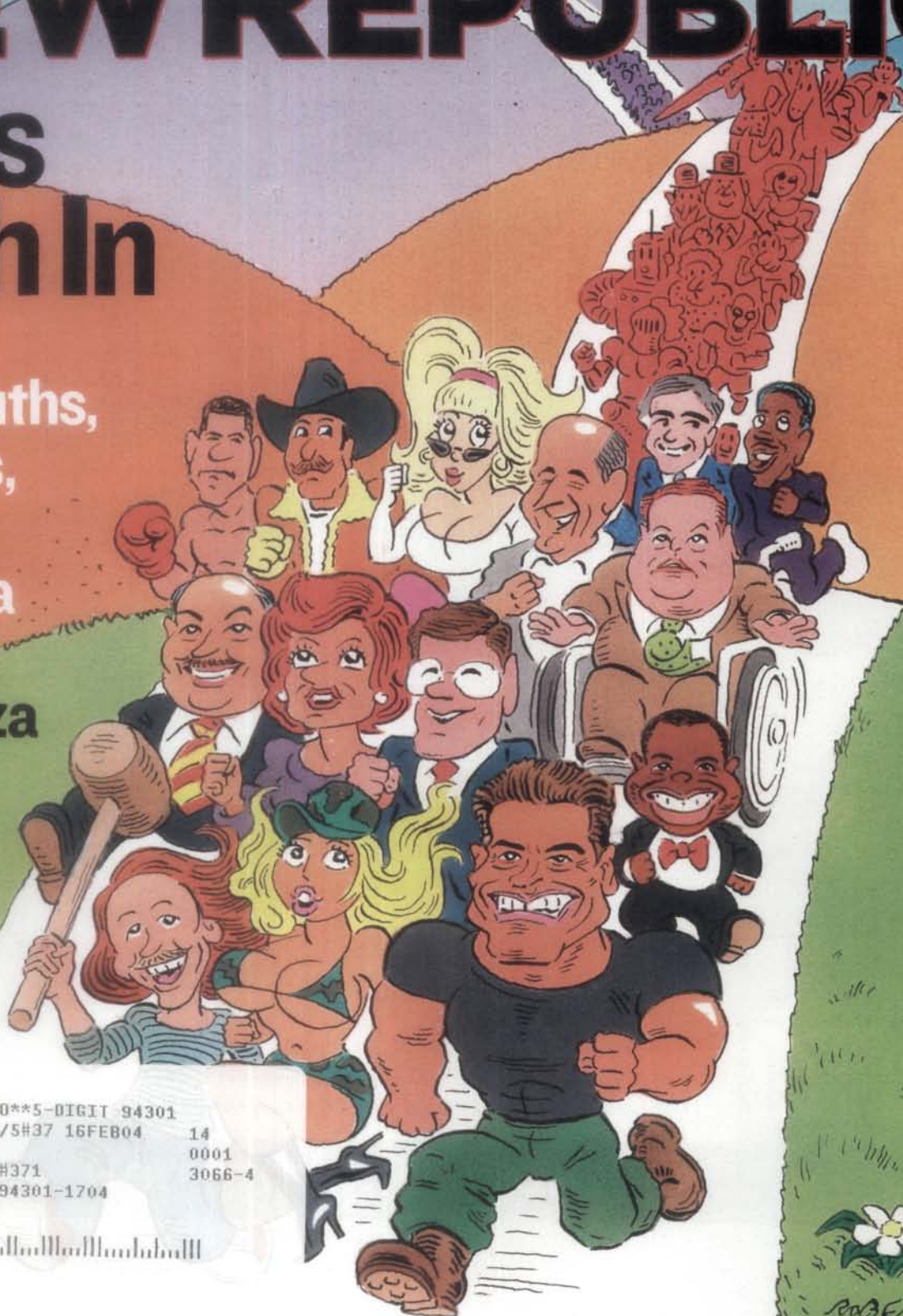
THE EDITORS

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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Fools Rush In

Cranks,
Loudmouths,
Strippers,
and the
California
Recall
Ryan Lizza



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND THE ARTS

SEPTEMBER 1, 2003 WASHINGTON, D.C. ISSUE 4,624 VOLUME 229

COVER STORY

Ryan Lizza **17 Fools Rush In** A century ago, California's progressive reformers decided the answer to corrupt politicians was a recall system that empowered ordinary citizens. Almost 100 years later, with Gray Davis on the ropes, a lot of ordinary citizens are feeling pretty empowered. Hiram Johnson, meet Mary Carey.

POLITICS & THE WORLD

- Peter Beinart* **4 CORRESPONDENCE** Is TNR pandering to its liberal base? &c.
- The Editors* **6 TRB | Compound Interest** Tom Daschle and Nancy Pelosi v. campaign finance reform.
- Peter Baker and Susan B. Glasser* **7 Two Bombs** And one enemy in the Middle East.
- Jonathan Schanzer* **8 NOTEBOOK** *The New York Times* v. reliable electrical power, &c.
- Clay Risen* **10 Moscow Dispatch: Boom** Moscow parties like it's 1998.
- Michael Crowley* **11 Sanaa Dispatch: Basket Catch** Has Yemen, long a terrorist haven, finally turned a corner?
- Jonathan Chait* **12 Opt Out** On stock options, it's congressional Democrats v. corporate reform.
- 14 On the Hill: Bombs Away** Conservative Republican Curt Weldon keeps a nuclear bomb in his office. So why are his dovish foreign policy antics driving the White House crazy?
- 34 WASHINGTON DIARIST | Zombies**

BOOKS & THE ARTS

- Stanley Kauffmann* **22 FILMS | Differing Bonds** *The Magdalene Sisters* depicts Ireland's notorious asylums for disgraced girls and women; *The Secret Lives of Dentists* examines the troubles of an ordinary family.
- Jed Perl* **23 ART | Oh, Cool** The Guggenheim's Matthew Barney exhibition and the new Dia:Beacon reveal the art world's zigzag from irrational exuberance to belligerent asceticism.
- Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein* **27 Who's on First** *Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game* by Michael Lewis
- David Hajdu* **31 Ain't No Mountain** *Motown: Music, Money, Sex, and Power* by Gerald Posner; *Boogaloo: The Quintessence of American Popular Music* by Arthur Kempton
- Bill Coyle* **33 POEM | The Moons of Earth**

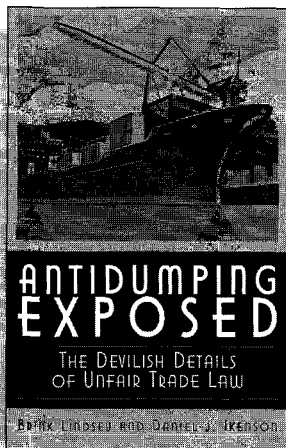
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CORRESPONDENCE

TARGETED THOUGHT

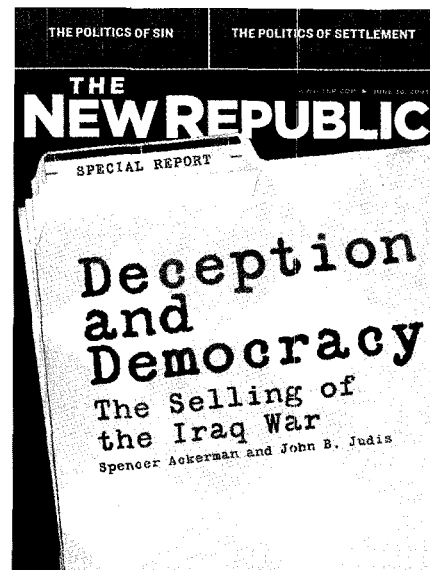
SPENCER ACKERMAN AND JOHN B. Judis's brilliant report has a fatal flaw—its conclusion ("The First Casualty," June 30). Unless an armada of weapons of mass destruction all pointed to our shores existed, there is no justification for starting a war. There is no preemption in squelching a threat that doesn't exist. The context of our times requires precision thinking, not ad hoc, indiscriminant use of the most lethal military machines ever assembled. Our enemy is and was Al Qaeda. Saddam Hussein's heinousness could have been handled with other means and set to a lower priority. The first priority is to hunt Al Qaeda wherever it lurks; the second is to address the woeful lack of preparedness of our civilian and industrial infrastructure. The invasion of Iraq was unjust; one day, journalists and historians may have the courage to say so.

BOB LUPO

Old Greenwich, Connecticut

UNJUST CAUSE

THE NEW REPUBLIC'S ATTEMPT to backtrack on its pro-war stance on Iraq is only a little gratifying to readers, like me, who found the editors' arguments pretty flimsy to begin with ("Reality Check," June 30). In the editorial, the editors admit that indications that Iraq's nuclear weapons program was indeed dormant, "in hindsight, undermines one of the magazine's central rationales for war." However, the editors defend themselves, arguing that Saddam's all-around wickedness amounted to a "moral emergency" that justified invasion, "particularly given that the alternative was endless sanctions, which, combined with Saddam's refusal to spend his oil revenue humanely, left hundreds of thousands of Iraqis dead."



Let us sidestep the question of whether sanctions imposed by the U.N. Security Council comprise a casus belli against Iraq. If the so-called moral emergency in Iraq justified invasion, then why not so the "moral emergencies" in Zimbabwe, Libya, Saudi Arabia, or, for that matter, Guantánamo Bay? The fact is, *TNR* chose the wrong side in this case, on both moral and policy grounds. Even after the fact, the moral case for invading Iraq remains, quite simply, not compelling. And, so far, the war amounts to a foreign policy disaster. The administration's claim of victory in a land that has devolved from tyranny into chaos is solipsistic and outrageous.

BRIAN D. SWEENEY

Providence, Rhode Island

IMUST SAY I AM VERY DISAPPOINTED by the position taken by the editors. Even if the administration exaggerated evidence that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, there was much evidence of

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Saddam's destabilizing tendencies since 1979 and especially since 1991 to justify taking action. And, if I remember correctly, *TNR* based much of its support for military action on these other forms of bad behavior.

This shift in position seems more like an attempt to distance *TNR* from a Republican administration just before an election year than to shed light on the whole situation. It seems that the editors have started campaigning against Bush's reelection to accommodate the desires of *TNR*'s largely liberal base. Such waffling does not earn respect.

TIMOTHY LA FARGE

San Francisco, California

COMPREHENSIVE CARE

THE ALAN GUTTMACHER INSTITUTE (AGI) appreciates Jonathan Cohn's article "Sexual Healing," which brings much-needed attention to the limitations of the Bush administration's approach to HIV/AIDS policy and programs (June 30). Although the president and his allies constantly promote the success of Uganda's HIV/AIDS-prevention program, their focus on abstinence as the only or even primary reason for that success is misguided.

Just as there is more to the success story in Brazil than condoms, there is more to the story in Uganda than just abstinence. The Ugandan government's program has been comprehensive, encouraging abstinence but also providing information about and support for condom use among those who are sexually active. The evidence from Uganda, like evidence in the United States, simply does not support a single-focus, abstinence-only approach to HIV prevention.

A quantitative analysis from AGI shows that Uganda's successful reduction of HIV prevalence during the 1990s resulted from progress on all three fronts of its behavior-change prevention model—delaying sexual initiation among young people, reducing the number of sexual partners, and promoting condom use among people who are sexually active. This integrated "ABC" (Abstain, Be faithful, and use Condoms) approach, which is being adopted by countries worldwide, shows the most promise for slowing the spread of HIV.

BETH FREDRICK

Vice President, Communications and Development

*The Alan Guttmacher Institute
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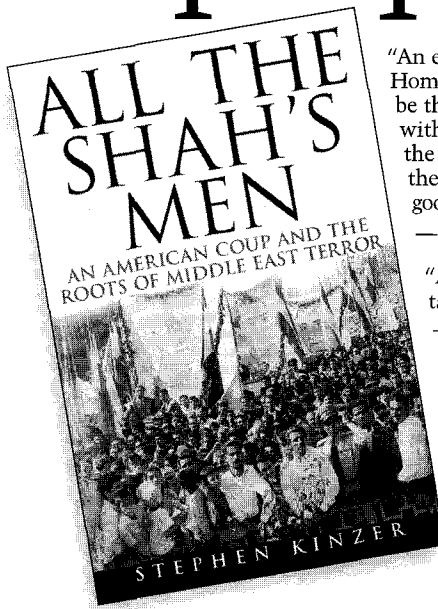
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Compound Interest

SINCE MAY, THE DEMOCRATIC presidential candidates have addressed the following organizations: Jesse Jackson's Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, the NAACP, the National Urban League, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, the League of Conservation Voters, EMILY's List, the AFL-CIO, the Iowa Federation of Labor, and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). That's more than one interest group every two weeks. And it has left James Carville and others muttering about the return of Mondale-itis, a condition in which the Democratic Party, absent any broader vision, becomes an amalgam of parochial interests that add up to far less than the sum of their parts.

Now the presidential candidates have a chance to prove Carville wrong. An obscure struggle over an appointment to the Federal Election Commission (FEC) offers a near-perfect test case of whether the men and women who want to lead the Democratic Party care more about its principles or its powerful constituencies.

Scott Thomas went to work for the FEC soon after it was founded in the wake of Watergate, and he has served as one of its commissioners since 1986. Appointed by President Reagan, then reappointed by Presidents Bush and Clinton, he has, by any honest measure, done an outstanding job. As the American Enterprise Institute's Norman Ornstein wrote in *Roll Call* last month, "No one knows the law and the history of campaign finance better than Scott Thomas. No one better understands the fiduciary responsibility of a member of an independent regulatory commission."

Specifically, while many of his fellow commissioners have brazenly tried to undermine the nation's campaign finance laws, Thomas has actually tried to enforce them. The discrepancy has been particularly stark throughout the last year, as the FEC—in a series of rulings that John McCain has called "disgraceful" and Thomas has called "beyond silly"—has created gaping loopholes in the newly enacted McCain-Feingold campaign finance law, patently contradicting the intent of its framers.

You might think all this would make Thomas a hero among congressional



Democrats, who overwhelmingly voted for McCain-Feingold last year. You would be wrong. This year, Thomas came up for renomination. By tradition, each party appoints three of the commission's six members, so, as a Democrat, Thomas's fate lay in the hands of Tom Daschle and Nancy Pelosi. And last month they sent him packing. Rather than renominate Thomas, Daschle and Pelosi selected Robert Lenhard, associate general counsel of AFSCME, in his place.

That Pelosi and Daschle would choose someone from AFSCME might not seem that surprising. After all, the union ranked second among Democratic donors in the 2002 election cycle and, not coincidentally, hosted one of the presidential dog-and-pony shows mentioned above. What's more, Lenhard was immediately endorsed by a host of other powerful, forum-sponsoring Democratic interest groups: the NAACP, EMILY's List, the AFL-CIO, the National Organization for Women, and the American Federation of Teachers. There is just one problem: AFSCME vehemently opposed McCain-Feingold. In fact, Lenhard participated in an AFL-CIO lawsuit against the new legislation. As McCain has noted, "I have a hard time understanding why Senator Daschle, who helped pass McCain-Feingold, would want to put on the commission a dedicated opponent of campaign finance reform, someone who would use his position not to enforce the law but to weaken it."

The answer is that Daschle had to publicly support McCain-Feingold—in deference to Democratic voters, who overwhelmingly believe unregulated "soft" money has corrupted our political system. But he is now trying to quietly gut it, because party strategists believe soft money is the only way Democrats can compete financially with the GOP, and interest groups like AFSCME are determined to keep running the bogus, pre-

election "issue ads" that give them influence over the party.

With another anti-reform vote on the commission, McCain-Feingold may be doomed. And it didn't have to be this way. Republicans never tire of saying that money is like water, that, if you prohibit one method of fund-raising, smart campaign finance lawyers will simply find loopholes and do much the same thing. But campaign finance loopholes, like tax loopholes, don't appear magically—they appear because enforcement agencies like the FEC don't close them. And they don't close them because Republicans—and Democrats like Daschle and Pelosi—appoint FEC commissioners who they know won't. The Watergate campaign finance laws actually worked fairly well for close to two decades, until campaigns began massively exploiting the FEC-created "soft-money" loophole, and the commission—toothless and underfunded by congressional design—let them do it. Sadly, McCain-Feingold could unravel much more quickly, since recent Republican and Democratic commissioners have turned the FEC, once merely an ineffective enforcer of campaign finance law, into an active opponent of it.

The result will be deeper public cynicism about politics in general. And deeper cynicism about the Democratic Party in particular. The party's reliance on soft money, after all, masked its abject failure to cultivate the network of small donors that McCain-Feingold encourages and that have powered Howard Dean's campaign. That failure is partly what has left the Democrats so beholden to interest groups like AFSCME, which can write large checks. And, now, in a vicious cycle, those groups are pushing Daschle and Pelosi to undermine a campaign finance law they ostensibly support, which will further alienate average Democrats and make it even harder for the party to build a mass fund-raising base.

When asked, none of the major Democratic presidential campaigns—Dean, Joe Lieberman, John Edwards, John Kerry, Dick Gephardt, or Bob Graham—would venture an opinion on the Lenhard nomination, even though they all ostensibly support McCain-Feingold. Staying silent is a good way to ensure a warm reception at their next AFSCME-style interest-group conclave. And a good way to convince Americans that the post-Clinton Democratic Party represents factions rather than principles. Welcome back to 1984.

PETER BEINART

Two Bombs

IN ONE DAY two bombs scarred two hopes, or maybe one hope. The carnage in Jerusalem and the carnage in Baghdad were both designed, after all, with a single end in mind: to make the dream of a decent Middle East seem even more remote, even more futile, even more like a dream. The military overthrow of Saddam Hussein in Iraq and the political overthrow of Yasir Arafat in Palestine greatly vexes the region's autocratic and theocratic villains. The Americans are insisting on democracy in Iraq and in Palestine, the Israelis are agreeing to proceed with the "road map" and relinquish control over cities under their occupation: It was time for the terrorists to reassert their sacred

desire to keep their part of the world plunged in darkness. In Baghdad they murdered aid workers, in Jerusalem they murdered children. Can there be dirtier hands?

Despite all the president's fine talk about American determination, it is difficult not to be discouraged about the prospects of the great historical experiments now taking place in the Middle East. The American forces in Iraq have not exactly been welcomed as liberators. Quite the contrary. The memory of three decades of unimaginably harsh oppression appears to be giving way to the memory of three months of inefficient social services. The anti-American opposition seems to be multifaceted and increasingly organized. Anti-American agitators from outside Iraq, from Iran and Saudi Arabia, are making their way into Iraq in a spirit of holy war. Secular survivors of the Baathist regime and religious survivors of its brutality appear to have found a common cause in their hostility to the establishment of pluralism and an open society in their midst.

What is so alarming about these developments is that they cannot be plausibly attributed to the various shortcomings of Ambassador Bre-

mer's program of reconstruction. Their roots are more profound and less amenable to the promptings of policy, they are historical and philosophical and cultural, and they resonate with the roots of reaction in other societies in the region. The destruction of the U.N. headquarters was not a protest against the lack of electricity in Baghdad. It was a protest against the possibility of progress in Baghdad. The worse, the better: This creed has always been the surest sign of political depravity, and it is the creed now of the terrorists and the reactionaries working to thwart the American enterprise in Iraq.

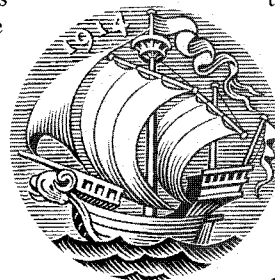
So are the United States and the United Nations finally on the same side? This is still unclear. In the weeks prior to the bombing of the hotel that housed Sergio Vieira de Mello and his staff, it was often said that the United States should turn to the United Nations because the United Nations could provide legitimacy for the United States. There was something galling about the suggestion that the attempt

to create a democratic society in the Arab world was lacking in legitimacy, even if there were practical reasons for the Bush administration to consider seriously the idea of a humanitarian collaboration; but the legitimating effects of such a collaboration are now buried in the rubble of the Canal Hotel in Baghdad. For the enemies of progress in Iraq, not even the United Nations is legitimate. Or to put it differently, for them there is no significant difference between the United States and the United Nations. Has Kofi Annan taken note of this gross reality, and recognized that the only way to stand for human rights in Iraq now is to stand with the United States and its allies?

The bloodbath in Jerusalem was crushing not because it was so unexpected, but because it was, even in the middle of a "cease-fire," so expected. The infernal script is not changing. Did anybody, Mahmud Abbas and Mohammed Dahlan included, really believe that Hamas and Islamic Jihad had repented of their crazy sanguinary ways? It was said that they were dormant, but a dormant terrorist organization is nothing more than a promise of murder to come. Until the Palestinian Authority recognizes

that it will not win a fight for statehood unless it wins a fight against jihadism—until, that is, Abbas and Dahlan are prepared to sink a hundred *Altalenas*—there will be no peace process and there will be no peace. Is this a call for a

Palestinian civil war? It is; but there already is a Palestinian civil war, except that the good guys (they had better be the good guys!) are refusing to call it by its proper name. Anyway, no Israeli government can responsibly conclude a settlement with the Palestinians until it knows the outcome of their civil war. In this bleak sense, Israel, too, is waiting for Palestine. ■



NOTEBOOK

BUFFETT IS RIGHT... THE *TIMES* IS WRONG... WE'RE CONFUSED

PROPERTY RIGHTS

EVER SINCE ARNOLD SCHWARZENegger named long-time Democrat Warren Buffett as a top economic adviser last week, conservatives have been up in arms. The reaction grew more fevered when Buffett suggested to *The Wall Street Journal* that Californians could stand a stiff property tax increase. "Those are fighting words," said Ted Costa, a California anti-tax activist. "If Warren Buffett is going to be in charge of helping Arnold develop tax and budget strategy, that would be a very poor choice." Club for Growth President Stephen Moore told the *Los Angeles Times*. In the wake of this criticism, Schwarzenegger, who has for years supported Proposition 13, the 1978 measure that has kept California property taxes artificially low, quickly distanced himself from his economic adviser. A Schwarzenegger spokesman explained that Buffett's view would be just one among a "breadth of economic and financial views [that] will be presented to Arnold." As influence goes, that's not exactly Rasputin-like.

What's gotten lost, however, is that the Sage from Omaha is exactly right. Buffett observes that he pays more than \$14,000 in property taxes on his \$500,000 home in Nebraska but only \$2,300 on his \$4 million home in California, and he concludes that raising property taxes in California might be a perfectly reasonable, and equitable, solution to the state's budget woes.

As it happens, this puts Buffett squarely in line with the vast majority of experts who've studied the state's fiscal problems. According to Peter Schrag, whose 1998 book *Paradise Lost: California's Experience, America's Future* is perhaps the definitive work on the subject, the practical effect of Proposition 13 has been to shortchange funding for social services, many of which are financed by local property tax revenue.



Warren Buffett

Indeed, in only the first year after Proposition 13 passed, California's cities suffered a 27 percent drop in revenue, which had a devastating effect on the state's social infrastructure. Schrag points out that California ranked tenth in the nation in per-pupil public school spending in 1970. But, by 1996, the state's ranking had dropped to forty-first. Even Buffett's billions couldn't make up that difference.

UNRELIABLE SOURCE

IN THE WAKE OF LAST WEEK'S BLACK-out, *The New York Times* blasted the Bush administration for not taking the lead on energy policy until "the sort of crisis that brought down the Northeast grid."

But perhaps the finger-pointing should go the other way. Since George W. Bush took office, the Gray Lady has been fighting mightily against a White House proposal to simplify the confusing "new-source review," which mainly

governs renovation of Midwestern power plants. Bush's new-source-review proposal has been repeatedly denounced on the *Times*' editorial page as "a bad idea" designed to "please President Bush's contributors in the utility and mining industries." In particular, the *Times* has worried that Bush's new-source review could badly worsen air pollution in the Northeast.

Yet, as Steven Hayward of the American Enterprise Institute has shown, most air pollution in the Northeast is already declining faster than in the nation as a whole, and the worst-case outcome of the Bush new-source proposal would only slow the future rate of decline. And the new-source review was important for another reason. In its editorial last week, the *Times* stressed the need for more electricity-infrastructure investment. Making it easier for utility companies to renovate old power facilities is exactly what new-source review was designed to do. But, with new-source-review revisions constantly stalled by lawsuits and editorial carping, utility companies in the Midwest keep putting off modernization. The *Times*' editorial page even had the temerity, two years ago, to denounce a group of mainly Midwestern utility companies for "illegally making major upgrades." Those upgrades have got to be stopped! As we found out last week, they were.

VARYING STANDARD

IN AN EDITORIAL LAST WEEK, *The Weekly Standard* enthusiastically endorsed the California recall, offering a series of reasons as to why Gray Davis has forfeited his claim to power. First, there is the economy. "California is in crisis," the magazine writes. "Its economy, its entrepreneurial spirit, ... nearly everything is declining." The state's budget deficit, the *Standard* notes, is shamefully large, but Davis has called it "insignificant." Moreover, the editors contend, Davis's legitimacy was

tenuous to begin with. That is “partly because of the nature of his reelection. He hung on by a thread, winning with less than a majority.” For good measure, the magazine slams Davis for his magic fund-raising touch, noting his “richly deserved reputation for dunning a large campaign contribution.” Sputtering economy? Dishonest efforts to downplay huge deficits? A fund-raising juggernaut? And a narrow electoral victory with a less-than-majority vote? We knew the *Standard*’s editors were keen on impeaching Bill Clinton. Who knew they would build such a devastating case for removing George W. Bush?

WEAK DEFENSE

RESPONDING TO CHARGES THAT THE United States failed to prepare for postwar electricity outages in Iraq, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told National Public Radio’s “Morning Edition” this week, “I don’t think anyone anticipated the fragility of the Baghdad power system.”

Perhaps he should check with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Last February, USAID released a plan for postwar reconstruction that said, in part, Iraq “lacks adequate generating capacity, as evidenced by periodic blackouts. Conflict damage to transmission lines and perhaps substa-

tions may be significant.” The USAID report complemented another one, from the United Nations in December 2002, which warned, “The electricity network will be seriously degraded because of damage to generating plants.” Apparently, some people did anticipate Iraq’s electricity woes—just no one Rumsfeld listens to.

TNR SCHIZOPHRENIA WATCH

LIBERIA IS NO MORE A ‘HUMANITARIAN crisis’ than was Bosnia or Kosovo.” (August 18 & 25)

“Liberia [is] ... one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises.” (same issue, next page)—Thanks to Richard Hirsh. ■

KERRY TAKES A RISK, FINALLY

Candidate: John Kerry

Category: Political Courage

Grade: B



Over the years, John Kerry has hardly been known for climbing out onto risky policy limbs. His past flirta-

tions with daring heterodoxy—on affirmative action and school vouchers in the 1990s, for instance—led to hypercautious political retreats. In this campaign, Kerry has so far uttered hardly a surprising or potentially offensive word. Which is why his seemingly unscripted thinking out loud on August 12, about progressive ways to reform Social Security, was refreshing and encouraging. Kerry mused about means-testing Social Security, allowing wealthy seniors to recoup their payments into the system but nothing more, leaving more money for people who truly need it. He also suggested raising the cap on per-year income subject to Social Security taxation, which now stands at a relatively modest \$86,000. “Maybe people ought to pay up to \$100,000 or \$120,000, I don’t know,” Kerry shrugged. Regardless of the specific merits of these proposals, it’s nice to see Kerry daring to say something risky, apparently without running it past a half-dozen pollsters and focus groups.

—Michael Crowley



CORN HUSTLE

Candidate: Howard Dean

Category: Domestic Policy

Grade: D



Iowa caucus season always means another round of White House candidates swooning over ethanol, that sacred cow of Midwestern politics. So, when Howard Dean unveiled his rural agenda in Grundy County, Iowa, on August 13, it was little surprise to hear him sing the praises of the corn-based fuel additive. Dean offers some noble-sounding reasons for pushing ethanol: He argues that it can reduce our dependence on Middle Eastern oil and that it burns cleaner than typical gasoline.

The trouble is that, even after almost 25 years and nearly \$10 billion in federal subsidies, ethanol is still expensive and inefficient to produce. The latest university research suggests it costs twice as much to produce as gasoline, without delivering proportional benefits. The subsidies politicians shower on corn-growing states

might be better directed toward other clean-energy technologies, such as wind and solar power (whose development, to Dean’s credit, he also supports accelerating). But, when you’re standing before a bunch of Iowa farmers, it’s not nearly as rewarding to talk about windmills as it is to promise jobs and money.

—Michael Crowley

DECISIVE

Candidate: Joe Lieberman

Category: Intellectual Honesty

Grade: A



Joe Lieberman’s support for the war in Iraq presumably wasn’t popular among many Democratic voters even when American troops were rolling into Baghdad and Iraqis were cheering Saddam Hussein’s downfall. So you’d imagine it’s even less popular now, after revelations about faulty intelligence and the realization that the postwar is going to be a lot more difficult than the actual war.

But there was Lieberman last week at the candidate forum in Philadelphia actually reminding voters that he not only supported this Iraq war but the last one, too. Lieberman’s point? To contrast his decisiveness with John Kerry’s spinelessness on Iraq. While Lieberman said he supported the use of force against Saddam before

the war and reiterates that support today, when things don’t look quite so rosy. Kerry won’t let himself get pinned down. He voted for the resolution authorizing force last fall but then said he had reservations about using force. And now that things look messy, Kerry’s touting himself as a sage. At the forum, Kerry said that he voted to give Bush the authority to use force because the United States needed the threat of force “to hold Saddam Hussein accountable” but that Bush “didn’t understand how to do that properly.” His doubts, Kerry said, have been proved right by recent events: “We’re now learning they went to war without an adequate plan to win the peace.”

Lieberman is just as critical of the Bush administration’s postwar planning, but his criticism carries a lot more weight, considering that he has already made clear that he supported the war. As Lieberman said to Kerry at the forum, “It was time for decisiveness, which is what people expect in their president, not uncertainty and ambivalence.” That line may not win Lieberman many votes, but it’s straightforward and honest, which is more than you can say about some Democratic posturing on Iraq.

—Jason Zengerle

For primary items updated daily and complete candidate rankings, visit www.tnr.com/primary.

Moscow Dispatch

Boom

BY PETER BAKER
AND SUSAN B. GLASSER

BOOMTOWN REVERIES ARE back in Moscow. At glamorous Noa, a new restaurant with pseudo-Asian decor and a Mediterranean-inspired menu, the bartender is imported from New York and the chef from Italy, but the designer-clad diners are Russians floating in cash from the country's surging stock market. Newly opened shopping malls ring the city while kiosks now sell sushi in addition to smelly sausages. Mercedes have grown as common as smoke-belching Ladas. On the dance floor at trendy Chocolate the other night, several elites were spotted dancing on couches and washing their hair in champagne.

A new gilded age has arrived. Fueled by oil money, the Russian economy is growing by a robust 7 percent this year, capping five years of growth. The trade balance is up, and the stock index soared from 277 points at the beginning of last year to a five-year high of 528 this week. After plummeting throughout the 1990s, oil production has roared back to 8.3 million barrels per day, matching Saudi Arabia as the world's largest producer. "Never before in the history of our country has there been such a renewal," President Vladimir Putin crowed this summer.

Moscow has seen all this before. It was five years ago this week that the last Russian bubble economy burst in the wake of a devastating debt default and ruble devaluation. And the surface similarities between Moscow 1998 and Moscow 2003 have stirred fears of a summer sequel. Yet the real question may not be whether Russia collapses again but whether it will take advantage of today's opportunity to enact reforms that transform the country. So far, the answer appears to be no.

Prosperity is a terrible incubator for structural change. Putin has promised market-oriented reforms, but lately they have been hindered by the lack of urgency that comes with \$29-per-barrel oil. The government made little headway on developing a modern banking system, overhauling gas or electricity monopolies, or fighting corruption, nor does it look like it will before parliamentary elections in December and the presidential election next March. Even some of Putin's aides have given up hope of progress until after the balloting.

With the Kremlin on cruise control, reformers in other branches of government and the private sector have been

stymied in their bids to take on old centers of state economic power. Two years ago, Putin installed his own team at Gazprom, the state natural-gas monopoly that represents 7 percent of the Russian economy, yet, by many accounts, it remains an unreconstructed bastion of backdoor profiteering and mismanagement. Though parliament has approved the breakup of Unified Energy Systems, the state electricity monopoly that is hobbled by ancient infrastructure, Putin has yet to actually dismantle the electricity behemoth. And, while the reviving oil industry has powered Russia's comeback, Putin has done little to diversify the economy to reduce its dependence on the energy sector and allow smaller entrepreneurs freer rein. Indeed, according to a study last year, eight business owners control 85 percent of the country's largest companies.

All this threatens to undermine Russia's goal of integration into the world economy. Last year, Russia pressed for membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO), which would allow it better access to trade deals and probably prompt more economic reform. Now, with reform stalled, Moscow has given up hope of WTO accession until next year at the earliest. Putin is "living for the day," says Stephen O'Sullivan, head of research at United Financial Group, a Moscow-based brokerage firm. "As things go well, you tend to ease off the gas pedal on things that might cause pain."

By contrast, damaging as it was, the "Black Monday" crash of August 17, 1998, amounted to unplanned shock therapy for Russia, forcing economic restructuring that helped usher in the current boom. Because of the currency collapse, foreign products were priced out of the market, forcing domestic industry to develop. A more realistic ruble exchange rate helped the government develop a more realistic financial plan. None of this happened without pain—millions saw their savings vanish, and thousands of businesses were shoved toward ruin. But, today, Russia is a going venture again. "August 1998 was a watershed that divided the short post-Soviet history into two parts, before and after," says Putin's economic adviser Andrei Illarionov.

AS A RESULT of the post-1998 changes, the chances of another default or devaluation appear slim. Despite its stalling on reforms, Putin's Russia is still running a budget surplus and has paid off much of its foreign debt, and Central Bank reserves stand at \$64 billion. Putin has brought a sense of stability to Russia in his three and a half years in office. And the budget passed by the Russian Cabinet last week authorized a new stabilization fund to provide an additional cushion in case of economic trouble. "Generally, the whole macro environment is a lot better [than in 1998]," O'Sullivan says.

What's more, Russia's rich are more mature than in 1998—they still party but are growing more refined. In the '90s, the much-ridiculed "New Russians" opted for gold-festooned insta-mansions on the city's outskirts. Today, the prevailing ethos is understated, more Armani than glitter. "We went through this child's period as far as our taste in

Peter Baker and Susan B. Glasser are Moscow bureau chiefs of THE WASHINGTON POST.

the early 1990s," says interior decorator Victoria Krochinina, "and now we are growing up." And the city is developing a middle class. Nearly one-third of Muscovites now bring home the average European wage.

Even so, Moscow remains a privileged city-state compared with the provinces still waiting for the benefits of the market economy that Putin's reforms could have helped deliver. With elections approaching, Putin faces the delicate political problem of explaining to voters why several years of recovery have failed to improve living standards for so many Russians outside the capital. "I feel ashamed for poverty," he said recently. "The quality of life is very low. There are very low incomes. Citizens of Russia have a right to, and should, live better."

Putin's desire to show empathy for the poor may help explain his government's recent campaign against Russia's richest man, oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky. The top prosecutor has launched no fewer than eight investigations of Khodorkovsky's Yukos oil company and his associates, alleging everything from fraud to murder in a case seen as political in origin. Taking on oligarchs like Khodorkovsky, estimated to be worth \$8 billion, is good politics in a campaign season—yet busting Yukos may scare foreign investors by making Russia's rule of law seem arbitrary, and it does little to promote reform. But then, in gilded-age Russia, reform may be washed away in the champagne. ■

Sanaa Dispatch Basket Catch

BY JONATHAN SCHANZER

A LONG THE SERPENTINE road that heads east from the Yemeni capital of Sanaa to the desert, the barrel of a tribe-owned tank peers out over rugged, lawless territory where heavily armed local patriarchs shun government authority and harbor Al Qaeda militants. In the governorate of Ma'rib, a cigarette-smoking 10-year-old carries a Desert Eagle handgun in his belt, one of some 60 million weapons scattered throughout this country of 20 million people. At arms bazaars, or souks, anyone with a fistful of cash and minimal bartering skills can buy rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machine guns. Yemen's ubiquitous weaponry is menacing and seems even more so when you consider that the country has been home to a string of terrorist attacks that began with Osama bin Laden's first in 1992 and culminated in the attack on the U.S.S. *Cole* in Oc-

tober 2000, which killed 17 sailors. Recently, several alleged participants in that assault escaped an Aden prison by drilling through a bathroom wall, raising suspicions about government cooperation with terrorists.

Yemen, bin Laden's ancestral home, is widely considered a war-on-terrorism basket case. Last year, on the six-month anniversary of the September 11 attacks, President Bush even suggested that Yemen had the potential to become another Afghanistan. But, in recent months, Sanaa has made quiet but significant strides in cracking down on terrorist elements. In the war on terrorism, Yemen may yet emerge as an unlikely success story.

The first improvements came in the aftermath of the *Cole* attack, amid U.S. pressure for increased counterterror steps. The United States squeezed Sanaa even harder after September 11, 2001, especially when it learned that Ramzi bin Al Shibh, who Washington believes played a key logistics role in the attacks, was Yemeni. But it wasn't until the October 2002 attack on the French oil tanker *Limburg* that Yemen's gloves came off. That attack cost this poverty-stricken country dearly in environmental cleanup, tourist cancellations, and port usage, which dropped sharply after insurance rates shot up 300 percent for vessels wanting to dock here. According to a government report, "Investment projects which have been already implemented at the cost of several millions of dollars were suspended. Thousands of job opportunities were lost. The total loss could be estimated at 1.8 billion U.S. dollar [sic]." Such losses are disastrous in a country where the average yearly income is an estimated \$840. The realization that it couldn't afford any more attacks—combined, perhaps, with some unease at Washington's ability to forcibly oust the Taliban and Saddam Hussein and push aside Yasir Arafat—drove Yemen to dramatically expand its anti-terror cooperation with the United States.

The following month, in November 2002, a U.S.-operated unmanned aerial vehicle incinerated a car carrying six Al Qaeda operatives in Yemen's badlands, including the wanted Ali Qaed Sinan Al Harthi, one of Al Qaeda's top leaders in Yemen and a suspect in the *Cole* attack. In December 2002, Yemen's rubber-stamp parliament published a surprisingly frank, 96-page account of Yemen's terrorism crisis, listing well-known attacks as well as smaller hits that had failed to make headlines. And now, nine months later, although two prominent Al Qaeda terrorists and dozens of lesser operatives remain at large in Yemen, there is a sense in Washington that Sanaa is genuinely cooperating. The CIA and Yemen's interior ministry have been working together, and FBI Director Robert Mueller and Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh shook hands in June over the establishment of a "Legal Office" in the U.S. Embassy in Sanaa, formalizing an FBI presence that began in 2000. Yemen now ranks among other valued allies with FBI offices, including Jordan and Egypt. Contrast this with the obstinate Syria, which once provided the United States with great intelligence on Al Qaeda but turned on Washington during the recent Iraq war by allowing guerrilla fighters to cross its

Jonathan Schanzer is a Soreff Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

border. Yemen-U.S. coordination, on the other hand, is yielding growing dividends. Yemeni intelligence tips thwarted a recent plot against the U.S. Embassy in Sanaa—a move that reportedly earned the personal gratitude of President Bush. The London-based Arabic daily *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* reports that the FBI office in Yemen is now looking for Anwar Al Aulaqi, an American of Yemeni descent who was mentioned in Congress's report on the September 11 attacks for his ties to two of the hijackers—Nawaf Al Hazmi and Khalid Al Mihdhar. In addition, military ties between Washington and Sanaa have expanded, beginning with increased coast guard cooperation. U.S. Marines are also training elite Yemeni forces to ferret out shadowy Al Qaeda elements, and, in late June and July, Yemeni forces arrested 37 militants in operations against the Islamic Army of Aden, a local group with known ties to Al Qaeda, in a village some 280 miles south of Sanaa. Yemeni officials say they have deported more than 5,000 terrorism suspects since 1998, and as many as 300 militants with known Al Qaeda links are in Yemeni jails.

JUST AS IMPORTANT, President Saleh appears eager to prove that he is not a typical Middle East autocrat à la Saddam, Arafat, or Bashar Al Assad. Thus, when Baghdad fell and Iraqi citizens were seen burning posters of their ousted despot, Saleh ordered his larger-than-life posters removed from Yemen's capital. Saleh has also de-emphasized the role of his son Ahmad, a 33-year-old colonel in charge of Yemen's Republican Guard whose military post and rank—which were incommensurate with his experience—were uncomfortably reminiscent of the roles played by Uday and Qusay Hussein. Although he had won a parliamentary seat in 1997, Ahmad was not nominated by his father's ruling party for reelection this spring. Instead, the General People's Congress lost Ahmad's constituency to Islah, the Islamist opposition party. Western observers still believe Ahmad is being groomed for the presidency when his father steps down in 2012, but Saleh now appears to be treading more carefully.

While Ahmad's political fate is yet to be determined, the internationally monitored elections that took place on April 27 represented a modest step toward democracy. Although Yemen's political system is nepotistic and rife with accusations of corruption, democracy watchers, such as the Washington-based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, say it is one of the freest in the categorically undemocratic Middle East. And, although Yemen's self-censored press might be viewed as an indicator of severe repression, in daily *qat* chews (four- to six-hour sessions when Yemenites munch on a mildly narcotic leaf), politics are discussed freely. Opposition groups, such as Islah and the Socialist Party, freely criticize the president, albeit within unspoken limits. Stepping outside those limits may jeopardize your access to power, but it won't jeopardize your life. While opposition leaders bitterly accused the government of tampering with the April elections, most are

still eager to continue participating in the country's deeply flawed but evolving democratic experiment.

This is not to say Yemen's problems are in the past. American diplomats are afraid to leave their heavily guarded compound because of recent violence, and the Yemeni government continues to undercut Washington's military and diplomatic efforts to varying degrees. Ahead of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, Saleh called for several large demonstrations (turnout estimates ranged from 200,000 to one million people) to protest American "terrorism." Last December, Yemen was found importing Scud missiles from North Korea, and, in mid-May, Saleh met with Mohammed Khatami, president of Iran, the other remaining state in the "axis of evil." He also met last year with Khaled Meshal of Hamas. Such developments are undoubtedly alarming, but they do not overshadow Saleh's contributions to the war on terrorism. Insiders here say these moves represent not so much a turn against the United States as a balancing act they call "walking on the heads of snakes." As a survivalist leader in a weak state, Saleh knows he must not only cooperate with the West but also work with controversial Islamic leaders and a range of domestic actors. If cooperation with Yemen expands, Washington will be better positioned to curb Sanaa's more questionable activities. Indeed, this is already happening; Yemen has agreed not to purchase any more weapons from North Korea, according to one adviser. In that way, Yemen—once considered among the region's worst offenders—may one day become a case study in how to clean up a terrorism-addled country. ■

Dems sell out to Silicon Valley. Opt Out

BY CLAY RISEN

ON JULY 8, Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer shocked the business world by announcing that, starting in September, the trend-setting software giant would stop compensating its employees with stock options—the right to buy a given quantity of stock at a fixed price—and instead hand out restricted shares of the company itself. What's more, he announced that the millions of options Microsoft granted during the last 20 years, which turned middle managers into millionaires and helped launch the dot-com boom, would be retroactively calculated into the company's future financial statements.

It was a dramatic move. By not expensing options, thousands of companies—including Microsoft—lowered their personnel costs in the 1990s and thereby artificially boosted profits. What's more, because companies generally did re-

port options as costs on their tax returns, they received significant tax write-offs. For example, thanks to its heavy use of options, in 2000 Enron went from owing \$112 million in taxes to receiving a \$278 million refund.

Ballmer's announcement is not quite the unilateral disarmament it might appear. This fall, the Federal Accounting Standards Board (FASB), which sets the country's financial reporting rules, intends to mandate stock-option expensing for all businesses. Microsoft's decision, says William Patterson, director of the AFL-CIO's office of investment, marked "the end of the golden age of stock options."

But, even as the FASB—and companies like Microsoft—consider reform, there is a growing backlash, particularly in the high-tech industry, where un-expensed stock options form the backbone of many a company's compensation strategy. Lobbying groups, such as AeA (formerly the American Electronics Association) and the Information Technology Industry Council (ITIC), are canvassing Washington in an attempt to block the FASB rules—even though that could derail future corporate reforms, sink investor confidence, and, as a result, cripple the fragile economic recovery.

And who has Silicon Valley recruited to do its dirty work? Congressional Democrats—the same folks who made such hay about the need for corporate reform after last year's Enron and WorldCom scandals. Problem is, as enthusiastic as Democrats may have been for reform in the abstract, they can't afford to anger the high-tech industry, one of a shrinking number of business sectors that gives generously to Democratic candidates. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, in 2002 computer and software manufacturers gave the Democratic Party and its candidates \$7.8 million; overall, 15 of the industry's top recipients were Democrats. So, in recent months, prominent Democrats have rallied behind a moratorium on new FASB options rules proposed by Democratic Representative Anna Eshoo and Republican Representative David Dreier. The bill's supporters include presidential hopeful Dick Gephardt and campaign finance reform crusader Martin Meehan; even Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, while not a co-sponsor, has signaled her support. The anti-expensing fervor reaches into the Senate as well, where Barbara Boxer has introduced similar legislation and presidential candidate Joe Lieberman has signaled his support. Indeed, it was Lieberman, with his 100 percent approval rating from the ITIC, who led successful efforts to block expensing rules in 1993 and 2002. And, while both bills have broad bipartisan support, it is the Democrats who claim the leadership mantle—Eshoo in the House and Lieberman in the Senate. "I've been on this for ten years and six months," boasts Eshoo. "I'm not an Anna-come-lately." All of which raises an uncomfortable question for the Democrats: How serious are they about corporate reform after all?

Since last summer, requiring the expensing of options has been a top priority of corporate reformers. And it's not just because of the tax loophole: As former Federal Reserve

Chair Paul Volcker recently told a House subcommittee, un-expensed options were a "contributing factor" in the 2002 corporate scandals. Thanks to their free-money allure, options made up more than 40 percent of executive compensation during the late '90s. This gave executives an enormous incentive to pursue risky, even illegal, strategies to boost stock prices so they could exercise their options and immediately sell their stock. "[Options] are... clearly temptations for abuse," Volcker explained. "[T]he incentive is given to the manager to attempt to affect the price of the stock, sometimes in ways that are inconsistent with the long-term health of the company." Expensing options, reformers argue, would enable investors to better uncover such financial finagling.

Last year, at the height of the corporate scandals, Senators Carl Levin and John McCain tried to attach expensing legislation to the Sarbanes-Oxley corporate-reform bill. But that effort was blocked, largely by Lieberman, who led the anti-expensing p.r. charge, and then-Majority Leader Tom Daschle, who refused to schedule the measure for a vote. After the Levin-McCain amendment was buried, the ITIC sent Daschle a letter thanking him for his "support for the high-tech industry's position against the expensing of stocks."

For a while, it seemed the lobbyists had won. But earlier this year, a new front opened up: The FASB, an independent organization funded by corporate contributions, announced it would consider the matter itself and release new rules within a year. And, again, the high-tech industry responded aggressively. Before the FASB had even begun its work, Eshoo and Dreier sent the board a letter expressing "strong opposition to any proposal which would mandate the expensing of broad-based stock option plans." The letter made its case largely along two lines: that options were impossible to expense and that doing so would force companies to stop giving them to rank-and-file employees. "[M]andatory expensing would effectively destroy broad-based stock option plans," the letter claimed.

But such arguments are widely dismissed by accounting experts and investors. They point out that many things are hard to value precisely—machinery depreciation, for example—and yet nevertheless appear on financial statements. And, while it's true that an expensing requirement might drive some firms to drop stock-options plans, for the most part options are too much a part of corporate culture to simply disappear. If expensing becomes a rule, "broad-based plans will continue," says Corey Rosen, executive director of the National Center for Employee Ownership, a group that advocates stock-option plans. "Only the companies that aren't so committed won't keep doing it." Moreover, it's hard to argue with the retinue of big names who have come out in favor of expensing: Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Chair William Donaldson, former SEC Chair Arthur Levitt, Warren Buffett, and Alan Greenspan, to name a few.

Nevertheless, the tech world and its supporters have pulled out all the stops. In March, Eshoo and Dreier

introduced the Broad-Based Stock Option Plan Transparency Act, which would prevent the FASB's rules change from being accepted as general practice. While the bill has its merits—it also requires, for example, in-depth, “plain-English” explanations of a company's option plans—it nevertheless represents a dire threat to the FASB, an organization whose efficacy, like that of the Federal Reserve Board, depends on its being insulated from the political process. The implications for future corporate reforms are striking, says Dennis Beresford, an accounting professor at the University of Georgia and a former FASB chair. “The danger in something like this is that, anytime anybody in Congress or one of their contributors doesn't like something [the FASB is doing], then they just enlist their friends in Congress to take issue with it.”

Indeed, the Eshoo-Dreier bill could hurt the economy in two ways. First, by politicizing the accounting process—a key component of corporate reform—the bill could hurt investor confidence, which has stayed afloat largely on the assumption that efforts to reform boardroom and accounting procedures will go forward. “We have all witnessed the ... loss of investor confidence in financial reporting that have resulted from companies intentionally violating or manipulating accounting reports,” FASB Chair Robert Herz told the House Subcommittee on Capital Markets in June. “What impact, then, on the system and on investors' trust on financial reports might there be if it were perceived that accounting-standard setting was being deliberately biased?” Second, bad accounting allows underperforming companies to color their numbers and thus attract investment—again, think Enron—ensuring an inefficient distribution of capital and, in turn, poor market performance. “The more we can get stock prices to reflect the value of companies,” says UCLA accounting professor Brett Trueman, “the better the economy will be.”

BUT EXPERT OPINION hasn't deterred Eshoo and Co., who say they will push to get their bill onto the House floor after the August recess. Anti-expensing Democrats in the Senate have also been pursuing the issue; in May, shortly after introducing her companion legislation, Boxer convened a roundtable “discussion” in which 17 lobbyists and industry allies ganged up on Herz, one of only three pro-expensing panelists.

While Eshoo-Dreier is still in committee, its chances of passing have improved substantially in the last couple of months—thanks in part, ironically, to Microsoft. By adopting expensing rules voluntarily, the company has provided ammunition to anti-reform forces, who argue that new legislation and accounting rules are unnecessary in an environment in which companies police themselves. “I would have said the chances were very slim, but now I wonder,” says Trueman. “The momentum might be on the side of those against expensing for the time being.”

Anti-expensing Democrats are doing their best to deflect accusations of corporate cronyism, arguing that un-expensed

stock options are a key to future growth. “FASB told me they don't have any economic responsibility, that it's not something they have to take into consideration,” Eshoo says. “And I understand that. But I do believe that Congress does.” Unfortunately, it appears Eshoo has confused the country's economic interests with those of her business allies. ■

On the Hill Bombs Away

BY MICHAEL CROWLEY

IT SEEMS SAFE to assume that Curt Weldon is the only member of Congress who carries his own nuclear weapon. Not a real one, of course, but a decidedly realistic replica, which the Pennsylvania Republican showed to me in his office on a recent July afternoon. It sits within a large black leather briefcase with combination locks. Weldon hauled the case onto a table, popped the latches, and flipped it open. Inside, there was a long steel cylinder surrounded by electronic components. These were the detonator gun, the neutron generator, and the bright red arming switch, Weldon explained. He said a device like this would yield a one-kiloton blast—enough to level the Capitol and everything else within four blocks. He had the prop built for him by a former CIA agent now working on his staff, after learning a few years ago that some so-called “suitcase nukes” may have gone missing from the former Soviet Union—a still-unsubstantiated claim that Weldon brought to the world's attention. “I was the one who broke the nuclear-suitcase story!” he boasts.

Believe it or not, this isn't even Weldon's creepiest prop. He also showed me a battered, pale-green suitcase with Velcro-affixed strips at either end. Peeling them back, he revealed a switch on one side and a small nozzle on the other. As he reached for the switch, he issued a warning: “You don't want to be standing there.” Suddenly, there was a whirring sound, and the nozzle began to discharge a fine, clear mist. “I could take this down to Metro Center and leave it on the platform. It can discharge a liter of sarin gas in fifteen minutes,” Weldon explained matter-of-factly, as the water vapor cloud slowly soaked his carpet.

The 56-year-old Weldon is a longtime connoisseur of terrorism nightmares. He was throwing around the phrase “weapons of mass destruction” years before September 11, 2001. He has warned of such obscure dangers as electromagnetic-pulse weapons, or “E-Bombs,” which can fritz electrical systems over a wide area. And, for much of the past decade, he has been perhaps Congress's most ferocious advocate for a national missile defense system—“one of the real stalwarts,” as a top GOP foreign policy aide puts

it. A 1998 missile defense bill sponsored by Weldon ensured that the program survived an ambivalent Clinton administration. (Or, as Weldon says with typical modesty, "My bill created national missile defense!") It also firmly established his reputation as an important Hill hawk. A few years ago, *The Washington Post* hailed Weldon, the second-ranking Republican on the House Armed Services Committee, as "one of the GOP's rising stars on military affairs." Weldon himself concurs: "Nobody's tougher on defense issues than me."

Given this self-proclaimed toughness, you might expect Weldon to display a bomb-first-and-ask-questions-later attitude toward foreign policy. You'd be wrong: Weldon is an internationalist who prefers negotiating with unsavory foreign leaders to fighting them. Indeed, in recent years he has arguably become Congress's most nettlesome freelance diplomat. During the 1990s, Weldon exasperated Clinton administration officials with unilateral missions to Russia and the Balkans. And now, by injecting himself into America's complex negotiations with North Korea—to which he defiantly led a House delegation this spring—he's doing the same to the Bush administration. With hawks like this, the White House must grumble, who needs doves?

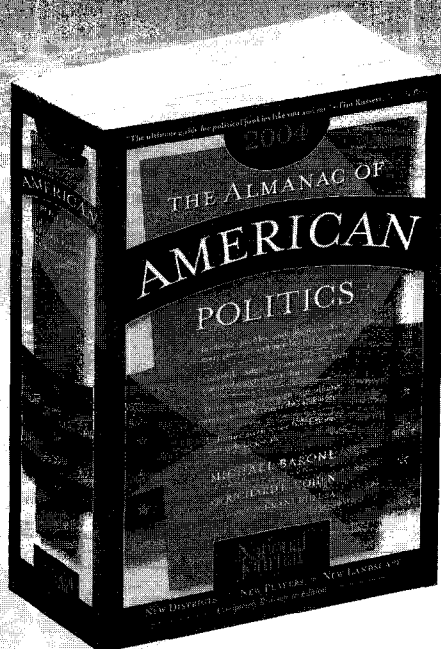
Weldon clearly loves nothing more than being at the center of the action. "You got [Ahmed] Chalabi's number?" he asked an aide when I arrived to interview him. "I gotta

call him. He's coming to a conference we're having tomorrow. I just talked to [vice presidential Chief of Staff] Scooter Libby about it." Weldon explained that he had skipped a Hill briefing by Donald Rumsfeld that afternoon because he has met with the defense secretary "many times." "I met with [L. Paul] Bremer today," he added. During our brief meeting, he also managed to name-drop Tommy Franks, Kofi Annan, Colin Powell, Al Gore, James Woolsey, and Paul Wolfowitz. And then there was the "source that I'm working with in Paris," who claims Iran has sent teams to North Korea to buy nuclear weapons, possibly with \$1 billion already deposited in a Shanghai bank; Weldon told me he'd passed the information on to the CIA.

Weldon is a hyperactive man, fidgeting in his chair and leaping up repeatedly to grab news articles and documents to help illustrate his points. He talks loud and fast, like a high school football coach, and people who know him say he is quick to anger. Weldon is famous for berating staffers, generals, and other congressmen—especially those whom he considers poorly informed. "He has the personality of a blowtorch," says one State Department official. "He is pissed off," chuckles a Democratic member of the Armed Services Committee. "I don't know what about, exactly."

These may not sound like ideal qualities for a world diplomat. And it's true that Weldon—a former fire chief and mayor of the working-class Philadelphia-area town of

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Marcus Hook—doesn't possess your typical Council on Foreign Relations pedigree. But, after coming to the House of Representatives in 1987, he leveraged a lifelong interest in Russia into more than 30 trips to the former Soviet Union, along with many other strategic spots across the globe. In 2001, Weldon's name even surfaced as a possible U.S. ambassador to Russia.

The byproduct of Weldon's travels is a worldview that's tough to reconcile with his tough talk on military affairs. In fact, Weldon can sound rather like a liberal when it comes to diplomacy. "All of our solutions to conflict don't necessarily come from a rifle barrel. ... The bulk of our problems in the world can be solved when people sit down and talk," he says. If that sounds a little mushy for a defense-minded Republican, Weldon disagrees: "I'm playing my role as the vice-chairman of the Armed Services Committee in not wanting to see our troops get involved in any more military operations than they have to." (Which is not so different from how Pentagon generals tend to see things.) Although some Democrats find Weldon a bully, others see him as a refreshing independent thinker in a dogmatic GOP House. "He's not one of these fellows who will submit his mind to the collective," says House Democrat Paul Kanjorski, a fellow Pennsylvanian. That independence, however, may be a reason why Weldon barely lost a 2000 bid for the Armed Services Committee chairmanship, leading him to accuse then-House GOP Whip Tom DeLay of betraying him. (Later, when DeLay ran for majority leader, Weldon warned that his "mean-spirited image" would hurt the party.)

But even Democrats agree that Weldon's diplomatic ventures aren't always well-advised. Though he has been an effective advocate of anti-proliferation efforts directed at Russia and China, some of his other diplomatic efforts have been of dubious value. With the Clinton administration working to end the Kosovo conflict in the spring of 1999, for instance, Weldon accepted a Russian invitation to join a delegation meeting with Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade. Fearing a propaganda coup, the White House dispatched Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, who successfully talked Weldon out of the venture. But, the next month, Weldon—who from the start had opposed U.S. military action in the region—joined such ultra-doves as Dennis Kucinich on a trip to Vienna for a meeting with a Milosevic emissary and Russian officials, who were aggressively opposed to the NATO action. That summit produced a peace plan, which the State Department quickly rejected as violating core NATO bargaining principles. Madeleine Albright went so far as to tell Weldon and friends that they were effectively aiding Milosevic. At a subsequent congressional hearing, Connecticut Democrat Sam Gejdenson told Weldon that, "if Democrats and Republicans had done this during the Gulf war, there would have been charges of treason." Today, Weldon insists his efforts were instrumental in ending the Kosovo conflict. "We came up with a framework that about a month later became the basis of the G-8 agree-

ment that ended the war."

Perhaps. But Weldon was clearly burned by meeting with another dictator this past December. On a visit to Belarus, a Weldon-led congressional delegation dined for four hours with the autocratic Alexander G. Lukashenko. And, just as regional experts had predicted, Lukashenko subsequently issued a propaganda statement claiming that Weldon "confirmed that the president of Belarus was elected by honest and democratic means and is leading a new spirit of development in our country." Weldon, who had done no such thing, was forced to publicly rebuke "such outrageous lies."

It's little surprise, then, that Bush administration hawks tried to thwart a planned Weldon visit to Pyongyang in May. Concerned that the current standoff could lead to war, Weldon had spent months cultivating North Korea's representative to the United Nations, ultimately offering to lead a delegation to the country in order to "put a human face on America." The North Koreans accepted. When Weldon asked for a military plane to make the trip, Defense Department officials claimed none was available. "They were saying, 'They're going to manipulate and use you,'" Weldon says. Weldon managed to wrangle a plane from a National Guard base in his district and departed with a delegation of six fellow congressmen. When the group reached Hawaii for a scheduled crew replacement, however, the replacement pilots were nowhere to be found: They had been told the mission was off. (Weldon says he knows who in Washington recalled the crew, but he won't say.) "Now, that's one thing you don't do to me. I'm a pit bull," Weldon says. After angry calls to Powell and Andy Card, the trip was back on.

In Pyongyang, Weldon was welcomed by such iconography as a billboard showing North Korean soldiers bayoneting American GIs. But his visit with senior North Korean leaders—not including President Kim Jong Il—brimmed with bonhomie. "We treated them like human beings, like members of Congress," Weldon says. "We slapped each other on the back, we told jokes, we made them do shots with us." Inspired during a fit of insomnia in his hotel room one night, Weldon flipped on a light at 3 a.m. and scrawled a ten-point peace plan onto the back of an envelope. He presented it to North Korea's vice foreign minister the next day. "He looked at me with a big smile on his face and said, 'Congressman, this is exactly what we're looking for,'" Weldon said.

That, in the eyes of Bush hawks, is precisely the problem. Weldon's plan calls for incremental concessions by both the United States and North Korea, leading to an end to North Korea's nuclear and missile programs in return for a U.S. nonaggression pledge and up to \$40 billion in international economic aid. "Most Republicans are flabbergasted he would make this proposal," says the Republican foreign policy aide. "It's essentially more of the same: a repetition of a failed policy, just with more money involved and more goodies for North Korea."

Weldon's proposal hasn't exactly made a huge public splash (although he says it was received favorably by State

Department multilateralists). But that doesn't mean the Bush administration can ignore this headstrong congressman as it heads into negotiations with the North Koreans later this month. Weldon says he has already been invited back to Pyongyang. And, this time, he says, he wants to meet

with Kim Jong Il himself. Given Weldon's track record, that's hardly implausible. "I'm a very persistent person," he says. "When I bite into something, I don't let go until I get the result I want." Presumably, that's exactly what the White House is worried about. ■

A stripper, a boxer, a watermelon-splitter, and the reality of the recall.

Fools Rush In

BY RYAN LIZZA

'COULD YOU VELCRO this for me?" Mary Carey asks. "Just down my leg. You'll see how it's connected." With that, I find myself kneeling on the floor of a strip-club dressing room fastening baggy army fatigues to the legs of the tall, blonde, 36-double-D porn star who is running for governor of California. Signed pictures of adult entertainers, many of them in highly original poses, grace the faux-wood-paneled walls. A stained, blue couch is littered with costumes and dirty movies. For the moment, this serves as a sort of headquarters for Mary's campaign to solve California's current woes with a mix of breast-implant taxes and guns-for-porn exchange programs. She is the new face of the citizen legislator in California.

But, right now, Mary has a show to put on. After much debate, she decides the first of her three stripteases this Friday night will be military-themed. The audience will have to wait until later for the "fairy" and "screaming penis" shows. Normally, Mary's husband, Mark, would be helping her get dressed, but, with only minutes before the show, he's nowhere to be found, which is making Mary visibly nervous. "I can't go out on stage without him," she says. "He does my brooming." That is, after Mary's performance, he sweeps up the dollar bills, and nowadays—after the week of local and international media attention brought on by Mary's first run for office—\$20 and \$50 bills, too. "I need someone to collect tips off the stage at the end," she frets. Mary doesn't quite trust the job to the employees here, and the Japanese TV crew—"I'm really popular in Japan"—and the photographer shooting for *The New York Times*, who were here just minutes ago, are down in the theater. Now it's just Mary and me. As I carefully work my way up the Velcro to the top of her leg, I fear she may ask me to sweep in Mark's place.

IDIDN'T COME to California just to hang out with porn stars. I, like many political reporters, came to write about Arnold Schwarzenegger's campaign. The problem is that there *is* no Schwarzenegger campaign, at



Porn star—and California gubernatorial hopeful—Mary Carey poses with former child actor Gary Coleman, another of the 135 candidates.

least not during the week I'm here, one of only eight before the October 7 special vote to recall Gray Davis and, if that passes, pick his successor. Schwarzenegger will eventually hit the campaign trail in the coming days, but the basic strategy so plainly on display this week won't change much: avoid the political press, avoid specifics, and coast to election on populist platitudes and high name recognition. A typical press release from the campaign reads: "Schwarzenegger Schedule for August 16: There are no public events today." The only interview he gives to a California journalist during his first eleven days as a candidate is with Pat O'Brien of "Access Hollywood." When I call to request an interview with Schwarzenegger, a press aide actually laughs at me. When I

ask to swing by campaign headquarters, I'm told, "You won't be able to get in—and there's a security guard."

I decide to try anyway. Schwarzenegger's campaign office is located on a hip little stretch of Main Street in Santa Monica. The neighborhood seems like it was built in tribute to him. A block away is MuscleMag International, which sells weight-lifting gear. A large black-and-white portrait of Schwarzenegger posing in his 1975 prime hangs on the wall. Across the street from the campaign building is L.A. Urban Fitness, and on the building's first floor is a cigar shop (Schwarzenegger is a connoisseur). I walk into the lobby through a basement-level parking garage, and, as I turn a corner from the stairwell to the elevators, my jaw drops at the sight of Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Covering two perpendicular walls, the floor to ceiling mural can best be described as megalomaniacal. On the left is a life-size painting of Schwarzenegger dressed in the leather costume from *The Terminator*. Bricks explode about him as he shoots what looks like a grenade-launcher through a wall and into the panel on the right, a scene of a couple dozen smiling Hollywood stars spanning from Charlie Chaplin to Danny DeVito, all in various poses on a sprawling film set. Maria Shriver's head pokes out from behind a column, while Johnny Carson talks to James Dean. Schwarzenegger is in full color; all the other stars are in black and white. It's not clear if Schwarzenegger is supposed to be gunning them all down or simply breaking into their world.

But I can't break into his world; there's no way to get up to Schwarzenegger's second-floor offices without a special key for the elevator.

FORTUNATELY, THERE ARE 134 other candidates on the ballot. In fact, you don't even need to go to California to meet some of them. Like three or four other bored D.C. reporters on a recent sleepy August afternoon, I found Gallagher camped out at a sandwich shop near the headquarters of *The Washington Post*. The aging one-name comedian, best-known for whacking melons with giant mallets, came to Washington between East Coast tour dates with a simple strategy for getting his name in the news. He walked in the front door of the city's largest newspaper and annoyed people until he was thrown out. He then set up shop at Jack's Famous Deli across the street and waited for the reporters to come to him. It worked: A profile of him appeared on the front page of the newspaper's Style section the following day.

Among the handful of C-list celebrities in the race, Gallagher seems the most desperate. He is so excited that I read his plan for California's future—including the use of "military-style heavy-lift helicopters to clear accident vehicles immediately," a ban on yelling into cell phones in public, the proper pruning of the state's palm trees, and the damming of the Sea of California—that for the next week he regularly calls me to discuss his campaign. He wants his ideas taken seriously and worries that his act may get in the way. "Smashing a watermelon could have been the worst

thing I ever did," he says sadly. "I'm a visionary. I'm a thinker. I *talk* for two and a half hours before I smash food." Besides that, he has experience in politics: He performed at former California Governor Pete Wilson's first inaugural.

Gallagher says he has come to Washington not to promote his tour dates—though they *are* helpfully included in campaign press releases—but to learn the nuances of policy from government agencies. His plan is to make stops at the Treasury Department, Pentagon, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Atomic Energy Commission. (The last one may be kind of tough, since the commission hasn't existed since 1974.) But, for now, he has only one major appointment on his schedule. "I will be meeting with Greta Van Susteren," he says proudly. "I don't know what level she is in the government, but she's my top chick now."

An Asian woman walks toward Gallagher with a cell phone extended and, in accented English, asks him to talk to her daughter. It's not clear if the woman knows who Gallagher is, but she definitely recognizes him as some kind of celebrity and that seems a good enough reason to want her daughter to say hello. Gallagher is thrilled. "Do you know Gallagher, the smashing comedian who gets food on everyone?" he yells into the phone. There's a pause, and then he frowns. "You don't?"

A COUPLE OF days later, I am speeding across the Bay Bridge from Oakland to San Francisco in a minivan with Arianna Huffington and her band of activists. Next to me is Roy Sekoff, Huffington's sidekick, a writer and producer who got to know the Greek-born columnist in 2000 when he helped organize the so-called "shadow conventions" in Los Angeles and Philadelphia, which served as conclaves for left-wingers and independents who turn their noses up at the two major parties. In the back is Van Jones, a civil rights activist of some renown in the Bay area, who will direct Huffington's campaign in Northern California, and another community activist named Taj James.

This is the campaign's maiden voyage and Huffington, sitting in the front seat in a smart gray pantsuit, asks me to help christen the minivan. As Sekoff tests out some ideas on me ("The Greek Goddess," "The Greek Salad"), Huffington's cell phone rings, and she is suddenly dealing with the first crisis of her campaign. From what I can hear, there is obviously some sort of financial emergency. "Yeah, because I put six hundred," she says. "I told her to put it in, and she said she did. ... OK, there's something wrong."

Hanging up the phone, Huffington turns toward me and explains the problem: "It was my daughter. I gave my fourteen-year-old her own limited credit card." "She maxed it out right away?" Sekoff interrupts. "She said, 'I'm here at the mall, and my card has been declined,'" Huffington explains. "So now I have to call and see if I can put some money [on it]."

As much as Huffington would like to stick to the issues, it's hard to ignore the familial subplot to her candidacy. Just

a week earlier, Huffington's kids were dragged into the campaign by none other than her ex-husband Michael, who ran for the Senate from California in 1994, when Arianna was still a right-wing socialite and a friend of Newt Gingrich. Not long after losing, Michael announced that he was gay and divorced Arianna. Earlier this month, there was a brief moment where it looked as if both Huffingtons would be gubernatorial candidates, but then Michael endorsed Schwarzenegger. Last week, in what may be the meanest and oddest public performance of the recall to date—which is saying a lot—Michael went on CNN and all but called his ex-wife a bad mother. Their two kids don't want either of their parents to run, he said, and Arianna is ignoring their wishes. "The day she announced, on Wednesday," he said, "the children moved out of her house and came over to mine." Finally, in case the world didn't know enough about what it's like at home with the Huffingtons, Michael testily responded to a question about gay marriage by saying, "Let me correct the record, for once. The article is wrong. I'm actually bisexual. I love women. I was madly in love with Arianna when I was married to her. But, yes, I like men also."

Back in the van, as Sekoff works the phone to up the limit on the credit card, Huffington is explaining why the recall represents the perfect opportunity to build a stronger progressive movement in California. "The system is just too broken, too closed, the choices too limited, and that's why I have no interest in running a conventional race," she says, as Sekoff hollers into the phone ("She's at the mall, and she maxed it out"). "But," Huffington continues, "this is the closest to a movement-building election you can have. You don't have to go run in a primary. ... You can go directly to the people." As part of this movement-building, we're on our way over to a meeting with Peter Camejo, the Green Party nominee. Huffington has gained enough cachet among the far left in California that Camejo has agreed to drop out and endorse her at the end of the campaign if she is doing well in order to produce a united left-wing voting bloc. Huffington reluctantly says she'll do the same for Camejo if he is beating her in the polls.

Besides building a movement, the campaign is also trying to define Schwarzenegger as a "Bush Republican." Sekoff is now back on the phone with a researcher, digging up links between Schwarzenegger's aides and the president. "Were they *accused of* or were they *found to have*?" he asks. "And who was funding them? Was it a famous person like Ken Lay? OK. That's cool." He presses his researcher about contributions to George W. Bush's gubernatorial and presidential campaigns. "Were they one of the companies that lent their planes to fly the lawyers down for Florida?" he inquires. "Check that, too." With perfect timing, he hangs up as Huffington is telling me, "Arnold Schwarzenegger is not an independent. He's a Bush Republican." With a mischievous grin, Sekoff announces, "And there's more and more to that!" But, in the next couple of days, as the campaign tries to dump its research about Schwarzenegger, it's Huffington's campaign that gets hit with charges of hypocrisy. The

day after Huffington tells me, "I'm going after tax-dodging," the *Los Angeles Times* reports that, although she lives in a \$7 million home, she paid no state taxes and only \$771 in federal taxes last year. Two days after that, the same paper points out that the candidate who rails against special interests has hired a lobbyist for the Minnesota gambling, tobacco, and garbage industries.

Huffington is learning that it's easier to disparage the unseemly things politicians do to get elected than it is to run a campaign without doing those things yourself. We have just left the front steps of Oakland Technical High School, which the campaign used as a backdrop to protest budget cuts to student bus passes. School's out, and the doors are locked, but it's a good place for a photo-op and a few sound bites. Standing in front of the school, Huffington declares, "You cannot solve this crisis with photo opportunities and sound bites."

Saying goodbye to Huffington, I check my voice mail. It's Gallagher. "Hi Ryan," he says. "I have this beautiful satiric picture of me with a huge tin cup gathering contributions to solve the California debt crisis in front of Treasury, and I can't get any of the networks interested." Somehow he thinks I can help. "Maybe we can do a story about the problems of freedom of speech for a comedian in a gubernatorial race. It's so strong of an image. It's a huge twenty-gallon pot. It's so beautiful. Bye-bye."

HUFFINGTON IS RIGHT about Schwarzenegger. As the establishment candidate, he has far more in common with President Bush than with Jesse Ventura, to whom he is often compared. But the analogy that Schwarzenegger has glommed onto is that of Hiram Johnson, the California governor who brought direct democracy—the initiative, referendum, and recall—to the state back in 1911. In fact, the homepage of Schwarzenegger's website is a paean to "the progressive reforms of Hiram Johnson."

Ironically, considering his reputation as the grandfather of the plebiscitary rule that is arguably the root of California's current dysfunction, Johnson himself had little personal interest in direct democracy. The white whale in his 1910 campaign was the Southern Pacific Railroad, which controlled the state's government institutions. During both the primary and the general election, he focused all his firepower on the corrupt railroad. George Mowry writes in *The California Progressives*, "This Beast, the Southern Pacific, which stalked the jungle of California politics, Johnson fairly shouted to his audiences, must be hunted out from its maze of organized wealth, vice, and corruption." Johnson rarely explained how he would do that. In fact, during the primary, Johnson clobbered the one candidate who actually ran on the Progressives' specific platform. One day, on his way to victory in the fall, Johnson realized he didn't have an agenda. According to Mowry's account, he turned to a friend and asked, "What in the world are we going to do after we do get in?" His friend told him they would create a system of direct

legislation so that, even if the railroad's political machine returned to office, the people would still have a way to exercise power. After a pause, Johnson turned to his friend and confessed that he had no idea what direct legislation was.

The true originator of the recall was a more radical thinker named John Randolph Haynes, a medical doctor and Christian socialist who founded the Direct Legislation League at the turn of the century to spread the joys of Swiss-style democracy. In 1907, when California Progressives organized themselves into the Lincoln-Roosevelt League, Haynes aggressively worked their meetings and sold them on his pet cause of giving voters the power to make laws (the initiative), nullify laws of the legislature (the referendum), and remove officials from office (the recall).

The package became the cornerstone of Johnson's reform agenda in his first year as governor. Of the three ideas, the recall was always the most controversial. According to Mowry, opponents tagged it "a spewing of intoxicated radicalism" by "reckless and desperate revolutionary leaders" and "a plan to tear down the prop upon which the integrity and security of society depend." The Southern Pacific Railroad seized on the recall as the weakest plank in Johnson's reform agenda and tried to use it to derail the rest of his program. But most of the opposition centered on the recall of judges. There was much less debate about recalling legislators and statewide officials. The measure passed eight to one in the legislature and was approved statewide with 77 percent of the vote. On the front page of *The Sacramento Bee* the day after the recall's final approval, the news merited only three paragraphs.

If Haynes and Johnson are the grandfathers of the current recall circus in California, the father is Howard Jarvis, the entrepreneurial conservative, who in 1978 changed California politics by almost single-handedly pushing through the famous ballot initiative known as Proposition 13. The measure, passed overwhelmingly by voters, lowered property taxes to 1975 levels, capped annual increases at 2 percent, mandated a two-thirds majority vote from the voters to raise taxes locally, and required a two-thirds vote from the legislature to raise taxes at the state level. In some ways, today's recall spectacle can be traced to Proposition 13, which simultaneously undercut the state's tax base, made budgeting more difficult, and launched an entire industry devoted to statewide initiatives that have, throughout the last 25 years, turned California's political system into a Rube Goldberg device.

Since Proposition 13, Californians have developed a knack for voting in favor of both initiatives that cap taxes (such as Proposition 13's successor, Proposition 218) and ones that mandate spending (such as Proposition 98, which governs education funding). When California politicians can't figure out how to govern within these constraints, they get tossed out of office, usually in a populist spasm, and new initiative panaceas—in the 1990s it was term limits—get placed on the ballot. This leads to what Peter Schrag, a *Sacramento Bee* writer whose prescient 1998 book, *Paradise*

Lost: California's Experience, America's Future—about the woeful state of California's political system—calls "a cycle of frustration, reform, and further frustration" in which the solution to every California political crisis is another round of statewide voting on quick-fix measures that often makes things worse, from caps on taxes to unfunded mandates to term limits to—voilà!—the recall. "Voters perceive government as unaccountable so they pass initiatives to restrict its actions," Schrag quotes political scientist Elisabeth Gerber as saying. "This constrains government and prevents it from responding to the state's pressing demands, which further angers voters and provokes them to pass even more stringent constraints." While nobody would call Davis blameless for the state's \$38 billion deficit, the recall is just one more round in this cycle of whiny voter frustration. The same naïve, quick-fix solution-hunting that got the state into its current mess is now supposed to get it out. Meanwhile, 135 opportunists have jumped onto the bandwagon.

ONE SUCH CANDIDATE is the Marin County Assassin, as former World Boxing Federation Welterweight Champion Paul Nave is known, and, a couple of days after my ride with Huffington, I drive over the Golden Gate Bridge to meet him. Nave lives up in the hills in a big house he built himself with great views of a wide valley below. His nose is crooked from his 26 professional fights, and his office is decorated with dozens of glossy shots of him in the ring. In display cases are his championship belts and rows of signed boxing gloves from his bouts. I watch him field calls from the *San Francisco Chronicle* and Reuters. He's already a pro. He whips out a piece of paper with his talking points. "I won't be beholden," he reads slowly, carefully pronouncing each word for the reporter, "to special interest groups. I will not be afraid to make drastic changes and unpopular decisions to make the necessary cuts."

What's great about Nave is that he only briefly pretends he actually wants to be governor. He ran for the State Assembly in 2000 and is really just hoping to parlay the attention from this race into a future local run. "For thirty-five hundred dollars"—the fee to enter the race—"the worst-case scenario is I'll get three hundred thousand dollars' worth of name recognition." In fact, he seems much more excited showing me around his new house than he does about talking about the race. We go upstairs to the master bedroom. "Deb, are you decent in there?" he calls out to his wife, knocking on the door. He shows me inside, pointing out the details he's proud of. "It's surround sound," he says, gesturing at some speakers. "Double-head shower in the bathroom. Jacuzzi tub with a view." In the basement, we walk into a closet. "This here is the mechanical room," Nave says. "This house has what you call radiant floor heating." He points to tiny boxes on the wall as he explains how to warm various zones. We continue the tour: "Two big water tanks, ... vacuum system for the whole house, ... steam unit there in the shower, ... vanishing-edge swimming pool." It feels

like we're on a home-improvement reality show.

It's that evening that I find myself with Mary Carey. But first I retrieve a new message from Gallagher. This time, it's an e-mail from his campaign, which is inexplicably headquartered in West Palm Beach, Florida. The night before I had received a voice mail from the comedian: "Ryan?" he said. "Gallagher. That picture's on the AP wire. Hey, listen, I'd like to tell you something. I want to give you a scoop. Will you call me?" He signs off slowly, despondently, "OK. Bye-bye." Alas, now it appears I've missed the promised scoop. The comic has decided to run not merely for California governor but for president. He had hoped to make the announcement on CNN, but coverage of the blackout bumped him, and he was forced to settle for a local station in Chicago.

Mary's venue for the night is Gold Club Centerfolds, located on the seedy outskirts of Sacramento, along an industrial stretch of highway, past a temporary storage facility and an equipment-rental store. When a security guard escorts me upstairs to Mary's dressing room, the Japanese crew is just setting up. "Welcome to California," says the producer from TV-Asahi.

Whatever else one says about Mary's campaign, she deserves credit for offering more detailed policy proposals than Schwarzenegger. She has a populist critique of Bush that almost sounds like John Edwards's if you close your eyes: "People who come from families like President Bush—you know, families where everyone has been an elected politician—why should we keep electing these politicians who aren't doing any good? We need diverse people in order to reach out to everyone." She has learned the lesson of Proposition 187, which denied state benefits to illegal immigrants, and makes a savvy play for the Hispanic vote: "A Mexican immigrant who moves to the U.S. and has been living here for six years, working at a factory, is obviously not going to be able to relate to Gray Davis." She thinks people will listen to her because "I'm more fun to look at." Like Huffington, she has completely adopted the goo-goo argument about why the recall is such a gift to California democracy: "What's so good about this election is it's getting people to listen to politics and pay attention who normally wouldn't." In fact, she's thrilled that the media has gotten past the fact that she is a stripper and is starting to listen to her ideas. "The Washington Post called me 'an articulate porn star,'" she says. "Not just 'a thirty-six-double-D porn star' but 'an articulate porn star.'" Then she picks up a cartoon of Schwarzenegger mounting her from behind, and hands it to me. "Isn't this the coolest?"

Soon after I finish Velcroing her fatigues, my fears about brooming are allayed when Mary's husband arrives. We walk downstairs, and, while she waits to go on stage, Mary strolls into the adult store connected to the theater. She opens the latest issue of *Hustler* magazine, which happens to be owned by yet another gubernatorial candidate, Larry Flynt. She's not worried about losing exposure in the magazine now that the two are competitors. "I'm actually pretty good friends with his wife," she says. In fact, Mary flips over

a page and finds a picture of herself. "They reviewed my movie!" she shrieks. What movie? "*New Wave Hookers 7*." We move into the dressing room for the other strippers. One woman snaps a picture with the porn star for her boyfriend stationed in Kuwait. Others snipe. "I think she's dumb," says a woman who asked to be identified as "a Sacramento stripper named Vegas."

Mary gives herself a final once-over in the mirror. "Right now fellas, the wait is over!" the deejay screams. "Let's make some noise out there. Scream your asses off for the star of stage, screen, and magazines—Marry Carrreeey!" Somehow, he forgot to mention that she is running for governor. Mary marches out on stage to military music. The Velcro pants don't stay on very long.

BUT NOT ALL the candidates are self-absorbed publicity hounds seeking to use the recall for their narrow purposes. Lingel H. Winters is a 65-year-old lawyer who rents office space from divorce attorneys in a San Francisco high-rise. He's married with three daughters. He wears a gray pinstripe suit and a red tie. He has thin, white hair, parted and brushed straight back. He's not a celebrity and doesn't want to be one. He's not selling X-rated movies or trying to rekindle his career. He doesn't even agree with the recall; he says he'll vote against it. He's as frustrated as any Californian with the budget crisis, but he doesn't pretend to know how to solve it. He's not like the numerous obscure candidates in the race who are using the recall to push a peculiar issue into the state's political conversation, like the ex-cop trying to legalize pet ferrets or the ex-con trying to legalize marijuana. He hands me a press release that says, "Winters stresses JOBS and EDUCATION as Job #1." He may be the least flashy candidate in the whole state.

But he's running for governor, nevertheless. Winters stood outside East Bay shopping centers in the summer heat for hours with his nephew and collected 125 signatures (75 were valid). He paid \$3,500 to enter the race. He has a campaign manager and tells me, "This is not a fluke." When I ask him why he's running, he says, "I've had this in mind for a long, long time." How many months? "I'd say since 1955."

Winters just always wanted to run for office. It started when he was 17 and met his hero, Dwight D. Eisenhower. He hands me a picture of himself in a white Boys Nation golf shirt shaking Ike's hand. Beneath the photo, a caption reads, "Ike Greets Kenmore Boy," and below that is scrawled "7/29/55." The picture is eerily similar to the famous photo of Bill Clinton shaking John F. Kennedy's hand when he was a 17-year-old delegate to Boys Nation. "When that came along, I thought, my gosh, Bill Clinton did the same thing," he says, almost in a whisper. When the recall came, he realized it would be the last chance of his life to fulfill his idealistic, boyhood dreams. He looks at me for a few seconds, blinking, and then breaks the silence with a chuckle. "Of course," he says, "I don't have any idea what I'm doing." ■

BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS Differing Bonds

FOR ANYONE WHO (LIKE ME) loves Ireland, **THE MAGDALENE SISTERS** is especially grim. Four visits there, plus the wealth of Irish literature—greater than that of many larger countries—create a rosy bias toward the place. But of course there is more to Ireland than warmth, and the chill is often connected with the ecclesiastical grip on Irish life, a fact sometimes volunteered to a visitor by Irish Catholics. Peter Mullan's film shakes an Ireland-lover into some balance on the subject. The events in *The Magdalene Sisters* were going on while a visitor was sipping Guinness in a chummy Sligo pub.

The best fact in the film is that the system it depicts no longer exists; the worst fact is that the system was not eliminated until 1996. In Victorian times, a network of homes run by the Sisters of Mercy was established across Ireland, within which allegedly sinful women were confined. Their ages ranged from adolescence on up—well up. These homes, for obvious reasons, were called Magdalene Asylums, and the inmates included unwed mothers, women who had been raped (the rapist who claimed that it was consensual was usually believed), even youngsters so attractive that they were considered potential sinners. These women were often committed by their parents, who were glad to be shut of the shame, although the film does not mention by what authority the women were kept for years in the asylums, virtually imprisoned. In each of these places was a laundry where the inmates worked seven days a week, except Christmas Day. This laundering was done for customers outside, and that income, of which the workers got nothing, supported the homes.

Mullan, a Scot, is an actor (he was a forceful Jean in Mike Figgis's *Miss Julie*), and he directed one previous feature film, *Orphans*, set in Glasgow. Some years ago he saw a British documentary about the asylums, we are told, and determined to dramatize the subject. He wrote and cast and directed this troublesome picture in such a way that in 2002 it

won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, a festival that takes place in a rather Catholic country. (The Vatican radio was displeased with the award.)

Its quality as film, past the irruption of its subject, is its basic value. Mullan gives his picture, which is

set in 1960, the sense of unwavering disclosure. He makes the most of the cheerless halls and the bleak dormitories that in their very furnishings reek of punishment. He often keeps his camera in close and uses a face, a single face, for transition or revelation. But in order to do this he needed more-than-adequate actresses, and he found them. Anne-Marie Duff as a rape victim, Dorothy Duffy as an unwed mother, Nora-Jane Noone as a pretty girl whose offense was high spirits, and Eileen Walsh as another unwed mother driven mad by separation from her child—these women give performances in which there is not a trace of actresses who got good parts.

The events of the film are steeped in cruelties, large and small, and in the tint of repressed sex. The mother superior is played by the cherished Geraldine McEwan (whose Lady Teazle in *The School for Scandal* forty years ago was the acme of that role). To see McEwan here using spiritual concern as an instrument, compassion with a core of irony, is to savor the counterpoint possible in fine acting. Her later outbursts confirm the earlier subtlety.

The Magdalene Sisters has been rebuked for its melodramatic manner and because no good-hearted clerics are shown. Prisons are always a site of melodrama, planned or not, and we need not be reminded that good people exist outside the walls. Thirty thousand women passed through these homes in the century or so of their existence: that fact contains buried melodrama enough, and those thirty thousand women suffered while benevolent priests and nuns were busy elsewhere.

Why was this film made after the homes had already been abolished? One reason, hardly trifling, is that it was made excellently. Thematically, however, it stings—as a reminder that Catholicism is only one religion that is dominated by males and that this domination is proprietary. These women were the property of paternal rule in the home and of clerical support of that rule; and this order of things is hardly limited to the Roman Catholic Church.

I approached **THE SECRET LIVES OF DENTISTS** cautiously. My father was a dentist, and I was not sure how much I wanted to know about his secret life. A wasted worry. The film is not generic: it deals only with two specific dentists, husband and wife, very modern, and their secrets are not related to their profession.

The very idea of dentistry is so unromantic that dentists are not often used as protagonists. (The only two that I know are in Bernard Shaw's *You Never Can Tell* and Frank Norris's *McTeague*, filmed as *Greed*.) This screenplay by the playwright Craig Lucas, adapted from a novella by Jane Smiley, shows courage in more than its dental focus. It has almost no story: its claim on our interest is in the texture of family life, which is what really fills the screen.

David and Dana, dentists in a wealthy suburb, have two successful practices and three small daughters. David, whose outlook is the picture's perspective, is generally happy until one day he discovers that Dana is having an affair. She does not know that he knows, and his dismay is tempered by a kind of emotional-social practicality. If he confronts her, then they must face such mat-

**THE MAGDALENE
SISTERS**
(Miramax)

**THE SECRET LIVES
OF DENTISTS**
(Manhattan Pictures
International)

ters as separation and possible divorce. If he keeps quiet and allows the affair to go on, he can hope that it will wane and evanesce. He chooses the second route. Their life together thus proceeds pretty much as usual until a finish is found.

The screenplay gives David an invisible companion, a troublesome patient named Slater who keeps turning up—in fantasy—in David's car and at the family dinner table and in their country home, teasing and advising David. No one sees or hears Slater except David, and he wishes he didn't. Slater becomes the nagging wise-guy voice of David's doubt. Other elements in his subconscious also take phantasm shape.

But the real material of the film is the quite ordinary daily life of the family—the mundane conversations of David and Dana, the occasional lovemaking, the meals, the massaging of muscle cramps, the kids' illnesses, the squabbles,

and so on. The director, Alan Rudolph, employs this dailiness as David's argument. Emotional adventures are one thing, says the film: getting the children fed and clothed and toileted and soothed and disciplined, getting daily household details settled, are something—importantly—else. Those matters are David's offering, with which he hopes to prevail over Dana's escapade.

Rudolph's past work has been spotty, but his stress here on familial sovereignty is moving, as is his direction of the three children (who are Gianna Beleno, Lydia Jordan, and Cassidy Hinkle). They endear through their normality rather than with big scenes. Denis Leary plays the irritating Slater and—plucky of an actor to take on such a role—irritates. Campbell Scott as David is short on sparkle but convinces in loving patience. Hope Davis as Dana has a more colorful role than Scott's and flexes it fully. ■

seums only occasionally, shares certain fundamental assumptions with more frequent visitors and even, to some degree, with the far smaller audience that closely follows developments in the art galleries where most painters and sculptors still make contact with the public. These visitors were probably a bit vague as to why Barney, a good-looking man dressed in a pink kilt, had filmed himself climbing up the rotunda of the Guggenheim and then projected the film on monitors suspended from the museum's ceiling. And yet they were perfectly willing to take in stride the arcana of *The Cremaster Cycle*, five films accompanied by drawings, photographs, and sculpture, which star Barney in a sprawling but static pageant of athletic prowess, costume changes, and gender-bending, set in striking locales ranging from an Art Deco skyscraper to a rocky coastline to a rococo theater. (The cremaster, for those who have not yet heard, is the muscle that raises and lowers the testicles.)

The generation of museumgoers that we are seeing at the Guggenheim are the children and the grandchildren of the people who started pouring into museums in the 1960s, and they have all too easily assimilated the shocks and ironies of Dada and Pop and the beguiling confabulations of abstraction. They have accepted the idea that the difficult, the challenging, and the obscure are ordinary matters: if not exactly to be understood, then certainly to be met with a tolerant "Oh, cool." Modern art—and that is what we are still talking about, no matter how many post- and neo- terms people attach to it—has never before been as widely accepted as it is today. Everybody is now perfectly comfortable with the idea that complexity and intricacy are built into art's very powers of seduction. But if the mainstreaming of modern art represents a triumph, it is a confusing triumph, for the seemingly wholesale acceptance of new work has a way of riding roughshod over the very perplexities that give an artist's private view its heat, its depth.

Surely the art of our time has never before been given so glibly swank a presentation as it receives at Dia:Beacon, the museum complex on the Hudson, an hour or so north of New York, that opened in May and has been as much a topic of with-it conversation as the Barney show. Dia:Beacon focuses on the work of artists such as Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Richard Serra, and Fred

JED PERL ON ART Oh, Cool

YOU CAN SAY THIS FOR Thomas Krens, the director of the Guggenheim, which was once New York's number-two museum of modern art and is now the city's number-one cultural madhouse. The man is a genius when it comes to bonding with the post-college-to-early-middle-age audience on which the arts industry has every reason to stake its future. At the Matthew Barney show, which filled most of the Guggenheim this spring, the crowds were fresh-faced to a degree that would make a publicist weep with joy. This was the demographic miracle of the moment. Amid all the euphoria, it hardly mattered that Barney's phony-baloney mythopoetic movies, accompanied by Dumpster loads of junk from some god-forsaken gymnasium of the imagination, were unlikely to engage anybody who has the instinct for the power of images that can turn a youthful visitor into an inveterate museumgoer.

Krens's idea has always been to live for today and let tomorrow go to hell. He is proof that in the arts community irrational exuberance is alive, if not exactly well. He is not so much building an audience as inviting people to rubberneck as the cultural institution that he drove over a cliff with "The Art of the Motorcycle" in 1998 careens ever deeper into the

abyss. And it works. Attendance for "Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle" was near 300,000, almost exactly the same as the box office for "The Art of the Motorcycle." A phenomenon of such proportions does not come out of no-

where, and you have to acknowledge that the marketing savvy at work here involves some rather astute calculations about the nature of the audience, if not about the nature of art.

Visiting the Guggenheim during the Barney show and watching people's reactions, I began to understand what Krens understands. There is a new kind of audience for contemporary art, an audience that, although it may visit mu-

**MATTHEW BARNEY:
THE CREMASTER
CYCLE**
(Guggenheim Museum)
DIA:BEACON

Sandback, who became widely known in the 1960s and 1970s. And so it often presents inscrutabilities—a plywood box, some fluorescent tubes, a curving hunk of rusty steel, a length of string—projected on a mammoth scale that turns them into provocations. Impersonality is thrust into our faces to such a degree that it becomes personal. I admire a couple of the artists at Dia: Beacon, especially Judd, and I think that Serra's *Torqued Ellipses*, those gritty yet poised sculptural juggernauts, have an authentic if overblown power—but even Serra's giants are gobbled up in the seamless post-industrial chic of this deftly renovated structure, which was originally a box-printing plant for the Nabisco company. The museum, with gorgeous natural light pouring in through lofty skylights, takes the old modern dream of reshaping the world according to the artist's ultra-ascetic specifications to a level of polish that threatens to crush all artistic imagination. Luxurious asceticism is offered as a production value, an atmospheric effect. Dia:Beacon—the latest addition to the empire of the Dia Foundation, which is dedicated to collecting and exhibiting large-scale Minimalist and Post-Minimalist work—spins a mood that is so singular, so consistent, and so pervasive that visitors are in danger of sliding right by the art.

THE OPENING OF DIA:BEACON and the Matthew Barney show have been the two most eagerly discussed events of recent months, and their juxtaposition is telling, for despite all that separates Barney's Las Vegas-style product from Dia: Beacon's belligerent austerity, in both instances the audience's wholesale acceptance of a modern opacity is somehow seen as confirmation that the artist is indeed able to communicate. The dilemma in which many artists now find themselves is that they are trapped between Barney and Beacon, between an over-decorated opacity and an underdecorated one. When opacity is so widely accepted, it becomes difficult to distinguish between the artists who are grappling with the difficulty of communicating and the artists who could not care less.

Today, to be an artist trying to give private experiences or avidities or interests a form that is lucid but not slick is to refuse both the Barney route and the Beacon route, and among those who this spring were going their own ways were

artists of such utterly different persuasions as Douglas Blau, Scott Brodie, and Barbara Goodstein. Blau, whose *Annunciation* was included in a show called "Living Inside the Grid," at the New Museum, makes variations-on-a-theme assemblages out of found photographs—often film stills and reproductions of paintings—which in this instance compose a Post-Minimalist hymn to women in bed, or just waking up, or receiving some piece of startling news. Brodie, a painter who can linger over ordinary objects until they take on an improbable importance, brought a slow-building fascination to the gray-green foliage and parked cars and red-brick façades of Albany in a series of canvases at the Bill Maynes Gallery. And in her show at the Bowery Gallery, Goodstein's sculpture, with its pats and smears and buildups of plaster on plywood boards, gave the old pastoral themes of undulating hills and tumbledown architecture a rapturous asceticism.

These three artists are utterly different in their orientations, sensibilities, and objectives. Only Blau, who presents his found photographs as discrete images in uniform black frames, does work that is related to the stream of Minimalist thinking that dominates Dia:Beacon. Yet he, as much as Brodie or Goodstein, views the making of art as the revelation of an enigma, and such a view is, paradoxically, endangered by the wholesale acceptance of artistic obscurity that Dia:Beacon proposes. Of course, the situation is not black and white (though that is the overwhelming no-color scheme at Dia:Beacon). I know that Barney's admirers speak of his richly allegorical themes, and there is an imaginative lift here and there at Dia:Beacon—in Blinky Palermo's playful array of black, red, and yellow paintings, and in the visionary perversities of the sculpture of Louise Bourgeois, whose work has been installed in a top-floor space, where she seems to be meant to play the role of the madwoman in the attic. Yet the unquestioning enthusiasm for a Minimalist temple such as Dia:Beacon can be indistinguishable from a refusal to engage with the very matters of form, sensibility, iconography, personal touch, and psychological shading that give modern art its complex energy. The difficulty of modern art is not a challenge to be met; it is a permanent and healthy condition. The audience that has accepted everything will never really see anything.

II.

THE EVER-GROWING AUDIENCE for art has its origins in a nineteenth-century appetite for the thrill of public spectacle. But the challenges of modern art, which by its very nature violates or inverts or transforms generally agreed-upon standards of beauty or craft or quality, go much farther back, to the Baroque and even to the Renaissance, and to Caravaggio and Giorgione, each of whom has been said to be the first modern artist. If modern art indeed has its origins in the dazzling experimentation of Caravaggio and Giorgione, it is because they have come to personify the twinned longings for confrontation and for withdrawal that characterize the modern artistic imagination. And although it has often been observed that the ever-wider acceptance of modern art has meant that Caravaggio's technique of shocking the audience with violations of decorum seems implausible at best, what has not been emphasized enough is that the dilution of modern art's powers means that Giorgione's method of drawing the viewer into the artist's very remoteness is far more important today than it was when Giorgione died in Venice in 1510.

When Caravaggio, painting the *Crucifixion of St. Peter* in 1601, shoves a man's dirty foot straight at the viewer, he is using this bit of naturalistic theater to shock viewers into recognizing a fresher kind of truth. Shock, which has come to be regarded as the modern artist's essential tool, functions as a tactic for drawing the viewer into the nuances of Caravaggio's unusual approach to a venerable story. Giorgione, a century earlier, eschews shock, although the poetic moods of his paintings can seem so far from what we know that they do indeed provoke disquietude. In his portraits and even more in his pastoral landscapes, Giorgione weaves an atmosphere that has such a personal stamp and is so seamlessly elusive that we are emboldened to try to comprehend its very alienness.

If Caravaggio breaks through the shared conventions of Renaissance art and literally grabs at the viewer, Giorgione backs away from that shared space, creating a world with its own authority. The authenticity of the place apart urges us to go to it; the artist weaves a lyric spell, and we engage with

him through our desire to understand. You can find echoes of Giorgione and Caravaggio in all the great modern artists. Manet is famously Caravaggesque: shock is his method. Klee and Braque are in the mode of Giorgione, interested in summoning an atmosphere that is remote yet immediately affecting. And then there are artists like Matisse and Picasso, who sometimes use Caravaggio's techniques of confrontation and sometimes Giorgione's methods of withdrawal.

At the Matthew Barney show, we witnessed yet another episode in the protracted death throes of Caravaggesque shock. For even if you can shock people, the audience's responses are too fluid and too mercurial to move from shock into revelation. In *The Cremaster Cycle*, shock becomes cozy. The audience may not see things coming, but they immediately take everything in stride, and the effect is a kind of mutual backscratching. Everybody feels oh so up-to-date. When Barney poses in an examination chair with stirrups, his spread legs revealing not his genitals but what may be the stump of a penis and a sort of penis-shaped or tampon-shaped afterbirth, he is only offering, with fancier production values, the stale avant-garde gambit of shoving your body in the public's face. This is an idea that goes back to Bruce Nauman—but Nauman's early body videos had a casual charm that is beyond Barney, who still has the sleek self-consciousness that in his college years earned him modeling jobs with Ralph Lauren and J. Crew. Barney, who was a downtown sensation with his first show at Barbara Gladstone in 1991—for which he videotaped himself, naked except for some mountain-climbing equipment, scaling the walls of the gallery—is by now as unabashed about pumping up experimentalist gambits to grand-opera proportions as Salvador Dalí was in the 1930s, when the Surrealists watched in horror as their onetime darling turned into the man whom André Breton anagrammatically dubbed Avida Dollars.

Barney is the Dalí of our day, a slick promoter of slippery feelings. The *Cremaster* movies, with a cast that includes Norman Mailer, Ursula Andress, Richard Serra, and a high fashion model who is a double amputee and walks around in high heels and Plexiglas stumps, are the kitsch soap opera of the avant-garde. Some observers have spoken about *The Cremaster Cycle* as if it were the *Ring cy-*

cle of our time, an impression that this hype artist has encouraged by giving the work a labyrinthine cosmology through which he proceeds on a mysterious quest. Barney is nobody's fool; he grasps that such an enterprise will be convincing only if it has an atmospheric richness. Recently he observed that he wanted "the carrier of emotion" in the films to be not "narrative" but "architecture and landscape." It is an idea that carries us back to Giorgione's poetic painting—except that Barney's movie-making is so dry and so static, and the weird castings and photographs that he dribbled along the Guggenheim ramp are so inert, that all he can manage are the blueprints of emotions. Even though he has shown his fans just about every inch of his body, he remains bloodless and remote. Barney's work is full of plot, event, mood, image, iconography, but those things are merely the raw materials out of which art is made.

WHILE BARNEY'S DOWNTOWN sensibility is incapable of registering deep romantic rumblings, a few artists have managed to pull off that seemingly paradoxical task. At the top of the list I would place Douglas Blau, whose assemblage *The Annunciation* was the only bright spot in the New Museum's "Living Inside the Grid" show. Blau rose far above the tired routines of this exhibition, proving once again that he is the romantic troubadour of the Post-Minimalist world. Each of his works—*The Annunciation*, with its multiple images of women in bed but not asleep; or *The Naturalist Gatherings* of 1992, with its intertwined motifs of scientists and explorers and libraries and laboratories—is a beguiling sprawl of images, drawn from popular and high culture alike, that play dizzying variations on a singular theme. Blau's idea, as I understand it, is that essential human experiences—waking up, investigating the natural world—have some almost Platonic structure that we may grasp by means of a near-infinity of slightly but tellingly different variations, which Blau is glad to see mirrored in movies, in paintings, in advertisements. Described this way, Blau's work can sound clichéd, but there is a lyric poet's delicacy and loopiness about his work-of-art-in-the-age-of-mechanical-reproduction mythologies. His image world has a gladdening intricacy.

What many people will probably first notice in *The Annunciation* is the still of Catherine Deneuve and a reproduction of a painting by Edvard Munch of a young girl sitting on a bed. That is only the beginning. The buildup of images, many from old Hollywood movies, can give you the sense of moving in and out of different periods, and there is a doubling of periods, too, when a nineteenth-century interior is represented in a 1930s or 1940s movie. The strict format of *The Annunciation*, with each image in its own black frame, becomes a way of emphasizing Blau's delight in difference, in particularity, in the infinite stylistic and emotional gradations that can be brought to what he clearly regards as the iconic image of the woman in her bed.

The Annunciation brings to mind the dossiers that Joseph Cornell composed of memorabilia related to performers whom he admired. Blau's work also suggests the intricately ambitious arrangements of photographic images that Aby Warburg used to chart the movement of artistic motifs through the centuries. Blau seems to have an attachment to system-building that is emotional, and maybe even a trifle mad. *The Annunciation*, altogether beguiling, also has the quality of a threnody, a quality of intellectual memorialization that recalls the strain of modernist nostalgia to which many people used to respond in Walter Benjamin, before the academic interpreters reduced his work to a postmodern cliché.

III.

IN THE EARLY- TO MID-1990S, Douglas Blau had a rather large success: the Museum of Modern Art exhibited *Stills*, a work he did with material from the museum's film archive, and he was represented in the Whitney Biennial in 1997 and in "Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film Since 1945," at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. If Blau remains a shadowy figure on an international scene that might be expected to respond to his analytical spirit, it is probably because museum directors and the people who organize the big international shows no longer know what to do with the audience except bludgeon it, and the romantic troubadour Blau will have none of that.

Events such as the Barney show at the Guggenheim and the opening of Dia:Beacon seem designed to stun the

audience into submission and no more, and the irony here, of course, is that the audience may be ready for much more. Going through Dia:Beacon, I had the feeling that people felt constrained by the sheer luxury of the surroundings. When a faint smile passed a guy's lips as he and his girlfriend looked at some of the sculptures that John Chamberlain makes out of crushed car parts, I had the impression that the girlfriend wanted them to move on as quickly as possible, before he embarrassed himself. The austerity of Dia:Beacon, with guards in black outfits, can make you feel as if you are under surveillance. In the downstairs area where Bruce Nauman's work is located, the atmosphere is like something out of *Alphaville*.

I would be the last person to argue that the man in the street's skepticism—or, for that matter, his enthusiasm—ought to be allowed to shape museum policy, but I do think that we have lost track of the place that bafflement, incredulity, and other unruly emotions play in the experience of art. Serra's *Torqued Ellipses* certainly inspire awe, but it is a one-note emotion, another Caravaggesque salvo. Aren't most people who were wowed by those works when they first appeared a few years ago a bit tired of them now? At Dia:Beacon there is too much emphasis on hurling modernist thunderbolts. This, and neat execution, and directorial efficiency, gets confused with artistic virtuosity.

True artistic virtuosity is never glib. Virtuosity is craft shaped by the imperatives of meaning. And, beginning with Giorgione, craft is a messy matter, because the standards have become so personal. It is a mess with which the power brokers in the art world do not want to engage. I am glad that Louise Bourgeois is represented at Dia:Beacon, an inclusion that many people have characterized as anomalous, not because her work is messy but because she is of an earlier generation than the other artists. Although Bourgeois does not have a great sense of form, there is a roiling imagination at work in a series of maquette-scale meditations on landscape imagery that are spread out like a feast on a table. And while a large metal *Spider* from 1997 is no more than superficially horrific, there is wit in the bits of old tapestry attached to the cage that the spider envelops, and in the spic-and-span environs of Dia:Beacon the charms inside the cage—a perfume bottle, a locket, a

pocket watch—can almost cause a frisson of excitement.

That machine-made art can hold us with its lyric force is clear to me, certainly from the hundred aluminum boxes that are Donald Judd's central achievement at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas, if not from the rather lackluster presentation his plywood boxes receive at Dia:Beacon. (Support from the Dia Foundation was important in the early years of Chinati, and the stripped-down way of presenting art that Judd pioneered there has clearly been one of the models for Dia:Beacon, which represents the Disneyization of Chinati.) But there is a limit to how much machine-made art we want. The overwhelming presence in the art world of machine-made art (as well as of handmade art that imitates the industrial-bland effects of cartoons or kitsch painting) adds up to a new academicism more stultifying than anything in the French salons of the really bad years of the third quarter of the nineteenth century. It is only in an atmosphere of such phony assembly-line virtuosity that the narrow poetic gifts of Agnes Martin and Robert Ryman could receive the attention that they get at Dia:Beacon.

CONFRONTED WITH RYMAN'S monochromatic images, you can ask whether he has enough to say, but Barney, who clearly has more than enough to say, does not communicate a lot, either. Each is too much the extremist to accept the dialectical risks inherent in the great modern belief—in Giorgione's belief—that the artist imagines a world at a distance from the audience and then uses all his technical resources to give that world a poetic urgency. But I am convinced that this sort of urgency is still with us. Going through the New York galleries in the months when Barney and Dia:Beacon stole most of the attention, I found artists who are willing to grapple with the messy dialectic involved in realizing an idea, and they included Scott Brodie and Barbara Goodstein.

Brodie's landscapes remain something of a conundrum, despite their hard-edged lucidity. He takes as his subject the scruffy, treelike shrubs that spread their unruly growth between the parked cars and sidewalks of Albany, and the fascination of the work is in the energy that Brodie brings to motifs that many of us probably would not think of looking at for more than an instant.

Brodie builds up his paint into thick but somehow meticulous surfaces, and he uses this buildup to give the intricacies of leaf forms, with their odd, complex gray-green-blue harmonies, an eerie precision that recalls some of Stanley Spencer's close-up landscapes. Goodstein also works from nature, but her interest in the Northeastern landscape, with its rolling hills and old stone barns and nineteenth-century churches, is expressed indirectly, through the sometimes giddily abstract counterpoint of white plaster lines that she inscribes on black plywood surfaces. The power of Goodstein's work is in the multiplying angles from which she approaches naturalistic experience, sometimes suggesting a spatial richness that harks back to Courbet, sometimes dissolving found architecture into Constructivist play. I have followed her work with enthusiasm for years, and I thought this one of her best shows, in which the real and the abstract became partners in the dynamism and the dissonance of an endlessly fascinating duet.

By the standards of Dia:Beacon, which measures achievement in cubic yards, neither Goodstein nor Brodie is ambitious. But their ambition is of an entirely different order, and it has to do with a personal feeling for craft, a feeling that creates a gathering sense of trust between the artist and the viewer. I know this because when I look at their work I experience the effects of such trust. I sense an imaginative expansiveness when I regard some of Goodstein's pieces, and some of Brodie's, and some of Blau's. I sense the same imaginative expansiveness here and there at Dia:Beacon, too, in Judd, in Serra, in Bourgeois, maybe in Palermo. And although the salutes to Barney and Dia:Beacon produced by Michael Kimmelman, the chief art critic of *The New York Times*, have left many museumgoers imagining that opinion is pretty much unanimous, that everybody trusts these artists and these arts institutions, this is far from the truth. There are certainly people who find that much of the work in these shows is closed-down, untouchable, not deserving of our trust. Even critics such as Peter Schjeldahl and Roberta Smith, celebrators of the new, have registered disappointment with what Barney is doing now, as has Robert Storr, who organized the Gerhard Richter retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art.

For the art-world power brokers who are behind the success of Matthew

Barney and Dia:Beacon, questions of taste are probably beside the point, a mere hangover from modern art's rancorous past. The people who visited the *Cremaster* extravaganza have largely accepted modern art at face value, although many scarcely know what that value is. And the museum officials who are embracing this new audience for contemporary art at the Guggenheim—and at Tate Modern and at the Museum of Modern Art and, now, at Dia:Beacon—would just as soon keep it that way. Skepticism, avidity, independence of mind—all the traits of the audience

that step-by-step came to understand the revolutions of Giorgione and that are still needed to see art today—are anathema to the suits who run the museums and guide the major reputations. While the financial difficulties that now envelop the Guggenheim have made it easy to criticize Thomas Krens, this spring he proved once again that he is the museum man to beat. With more than a little help from Matthew Barney, he has turned contemporary art into a popular hit. He would say that he trusted the public and so they came. I would say that a lot of people have been snookered. ■

evidence, explicitly ignoring anything that could be dismissed as “subjective.”

Beane found that, as a statistical regularity, players drafted out of high school are much less likely to succeed than players drafted out of college. And so he drafted no high school players, regardless of how highly they were touted. He hired a young assistant named Paul DePodesta, a Harvard economics graduate, who relied on his computer to project players' performances, without so much as ever seeing a player swing a bat. Much of the tension, and the comedy, of Lewis's book comes from the conflict between Beane's and DePodesta's statistical methods of evaluation and the well-established strategies of experts who have scouted, played, and breathed baseball for decades. The verdict? Statistical methods outperform experts. It's not even close.

As Lewis tells the tale, Beane's particular approach has intensely personal foundations. Beane himself was a top high school prospect, one of the most sought-after in the nation. He was fast, he was tall, he was strong, he could hit the ball a mile. The baseball scouts loved him. As one of them admitted, “I never looked at a single statistic of Billy's. It couldn't have crossed my mind. . . . He had it all.” According to another, “The boy had a body you could dream on. Ramrod-straight and lean but not so lean you couldn't imagine him filling out. And that face!” Beane was selected in the first round of the draft, with the highest of expectations. He was destined to be a star.

There was just one problem: Beane did not play baseball very well. He thought too much. He was too emotional. His failures notwithstanding, baseball people saw his body, and his face, and his raw talent, and concluded that he was bound to succeed. “Teammates would look at Billy and see the future of the New York Mets. Scouts would look at him and see what they had always seen. . . . The body. The Good Face.” He certainly had talent, and once in a while he would do something truly sensational. But after several years in major league baseball, his performance was woefully bad. With only 301 at-bats, he hit .219; more embarrassingly, he had 80 strikeouts and only 11 walks. Abruptly, he quit the game. While playing for Oakland, he told the team's general manager that he no longer wanted to be a player, and would prefer the job of advance scout, an employee who travels ahead of the team

Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein **Who's on First**

**MONEYBALL: THE ART OF
WINNING AN UNFAIR GAME**

By Michael Lewis

(W. W. Norton, 288 pp., \$24.95)

MICHAEL LEWIS'S NEW book is a sensation. It treats a topic that would seem to interest only sports fans: how Billy Beane, the charismatic general manager of the Oakland Athletics, turned his baseball team around using, of all things, statistics. What next—an inspirational tale about superior database management? But there are some broader lessons in Lewis's book that make it worth the attention also of people who do not know the difference between a slider and a screwball. Those lessons have to do, above all, with the limits of human rationality and the efficiency of labor markets. If Lewis is right about the blunders and the confusions of those who run baseball teams, then his tale has a lot to

tell us about blunders and confusions in many other domains.

Lewis focuses on the extraordinary success of Beane, who has produced a terrific baseball team despite one of the lower payrolls in baseball. Since 1999, when Beane took over, the Athletics have compiled an amazing record. Consider a few numbers. In 1999, the Athletics ranked eleventh (out of fourteen teams) in the American League in payroll and fifth in wins. In 2000, the Athletics ranked twelfth in payroll and second in wins, a feat that they duplicated in 2001. In 2002, they ranked twelfth in payroll again—and first in wins.

How did Beane pull this off? He did it largely by ignoring or defying baseball's conventional wisdom, otherwise known in baseball lingo as *The Book*. (As in, “*The Book* says that you should bunt in this situation.”) It turns out that many chapters of *The Book* are simply wrong. Sacrifice bunts are rarely a good strategy, and steals are vastly overrated. (Unless a base stealer succeeds at least three-quarters of the time, his running efforts reduce runs scored rather than increase them.) The portion of *The Book* that was most in need of revision, and the most important edge that Beane was able to exploit, was in player evaluation. Here he tried to figure out, scientifically, how much a player was likely to contribute to his team's chances. He relied on objective

Richard H. Thaler teaches at the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business and is the author of THE WINNER'S CURSE (Princeton University Press). Cass R. Sunstein teaches at the University of Chicago Law School. His new book, WHY SOCIETIES NEED DISSENT, will be published by Harvard University Press this fall.

to analyze future opponents. The team's general manager was stunned: "Nobody does that. Nobody says, I quit as a player. I want to be an advance scout."

BEANE WAS A MUCH BETTER baseball analyst than baseball player, and he quickly moved up the Oakland club's hierarchy. He became interested in a simple question: what is the most efficient way to spend money on baseball players? The origins of Beane's iconoclastic answers can be found in the writings of Bill James, a once obscure but now legendary baseball writer-statistician. While working as a night watchman for a pork-and-beans factory, James decided that he wanted to write about baseball in a way that would illuminate what really happened and why. In his view, conventional statistics were insufficiently helpful and sometimes downright misleading. Consider the area of defensive play. When a player mishandles a ball or makes a bad throw, he can be assigned an "error." A player who accumulates a lot of errors seems like a bad fielder, whereas one with few errors seems really good. The problem is that a player may accumulate errors in part because he is unusually good at getting to the ball. If you do not get to the ball, you do not get an error (according to the chapter on scoring in *The Book*). So errors are a crude measure of fielding ability.

Or consider walks. Since the late nineteenth century, walks have been treated, in official statistics, as neutral—neither good nor bad. According to a nineteenth-century expert whose advice is followed to the present day, "There is but one true criterion of skill at the bat, and that is the number of times bases are made on clean hits." Of course, many people realized that a walk is a positive event for the hitting team and a negative event for the team in the field, but this commonsense notion was not incorporated into baseball's most common measure of batting skill, the batting average, which leaves walks out. James found this preposterous, and he pushed for the use of the "on-base percentage" as an improvement. James also criticized a standard measure of a hitter's value, the notion of "runs batted in." James pointed out that some players are in a position to bat in a lot of runs, because they are lucky or because they play on good teams. Other players bat in fewer runs, but only because they do not have the opportunities of their apparent

superiors: "There is a huge element of luck in even having the opportunity, and what wasn't luck was, partly, the achievement of others."

Eventually James punctured countless myths about what was important to winning in baseball. And he had a positive agenda, too. He devised a formula to measure "runs created"—a formula that predicted, from just a few aspects of a player's performance, how many runs he would produce for an average team. James's formula had explosive implications. It suggested that professional baseball experts, those who ran the teams, were placing far too much emphasis on batting averages and stolen bases, and far too little on walks and extra base hits. After a slow start, James was widely read; his books became best-sellers, and he became a kind of cult figure among certain baseball fans. But baseball's experts and executives treated James's work as irrelevant. He had no effect on what they did. And with a few exceptions, the tried-but-not-so-true baseball statistics such as batting average and RBIs remain the only ones reported.

So Billy Beane, the "can't miss" prospect who missed, became an avid Bill James reader. As Lewis writes, "James had something to say specifically to Billy: you were on the receiving end of a false idea of what makes a successful baseball player. James also had something general to say to Billy, or any other general manager of a baseball team who had the guts, or the need, to listen: if you challenge the conventional wisdom, you will find ways to do things much better than they are currently done." Wanting to ensure that statistical analyses were done, and done right, Beane hired DePodesta to study player performances with the aid of a computer. Some of Lewis's most hilarious passages illustrate the debate between old baseball wisdom and statistical knowledge:

"The guy's an athlete, Billy," the old scout says. "There's a lot of upside there."

"He can't hit," says Billy.

"He's not that bad a hitter," says the old scout.

"Yeah, what happens when he doesn't know a fastball is coming?" says Billy.

"He's a tools guy," says the old scout....

"But can he hit?" asks Billy.

"He can hit," says the old scout,

unconvincingly.

Paul reads the player's college batting statistics. They contain a conspicuous lack of extra base hits and walks.

"My only question is," says Billy, "if he's that good a hitter why doesn't he hit better?"...

Over and over the old scouts will say, "The guy has a great body," or, "This guy may be the best body in the draft." And every time they do, Billy will say, "We're not selling jeans here," and deposit yet another highly touted player, beloved by the scouts, onto his shit list.

Beane ends up seeking, and getting, young players that other teams simply do not want. These were people largely ignored by the professional scouts, typically because they had something wrong with them—they did not match up with the scouts' mental prototype of a successful ballplayer. While scouts on other teams were still searching for young players who looked like Beane did in high school, DePodesta was busy surfing the Internet. "The evaluation of young baseball players," Lewis writes, "had been taken out of the hands of old baseball men and placed in the hands of people who had what Billy valued most (and what Billy didn't have), a degree in something other than baseball."

The statistical method was the only way for Beane to solve a serious problem: obtaining first-rate talent without a lot of money. After all, the New York Yankees had three times the budget of the Oakland Athletics. And if Beane did find good players, and they performed well, they would be bid away by richer teams. Owing to his low payroll, he would be forced to replace his own greatest successes. In 2001, Oakland won 102 games in the regular season, the second-highest total in baseball. They lost three players widely regarded as their best, and they were expected by many to have a catastrophic fall. Instead they used statistical methods to try to replace the lost players with new ones who would provide statistical equivalents—and they ended up winning 103 games, the most in baseball. Their payroll for that year was \$34 million, less than half that of their division rivals the Seattle Mariners. In Lewis's account, Beane was able to succeed because "the market for baseball players was so inefficient, and the general grasp of sound baseball strategy so weak, that superior management

could still run circles around taller piles of cash."

LEWIS HAS A WONDERFUL STORY to tell, and he tells it wonderfully. His account of Beane's success is punctuated by descriptions of numerous colorful characters, among them a promising fat catcher dumbfounded by Beane's interest in him, an excellent pitcher whose fastball is extremely slow, and of course Beane himself. Lewis also raises some serious puzzles that he does not resolve, and his account has some large and perhaps profound implications that he does not much explore.

Why do professional baseball executives, many of whom have spent their lives in the game, make so many colossal mistakes? They are paid well, and they are specialists. They have every incentive to evaluate talent correctly. So why do they blunder? In an intriguing passage, Lewis offers three clues. First, those who played the game seem to overgeneralize from personal experience: "People always thought their own experience was typical when it wasn't." Second, the professionals were unduly affected by how a player had performed most recently, even though recent performance is not always a good guide. Third, people were biased by what they saw, or thought they saw, with their own eyes. This is a real problem, because the human mind plays tricks, and because there is "a lot you couldn't see when you watched a baseball game."

Lewis is actually speaking here of a central finding in cognitive psychology. In making judgments, people tend to use the "availability heuristic." As Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky have shown, people often assess the probability of an event by asking whether relevant examples are cognitively "available." Thus, people are likely to think that more words, on a random page, end with the letters "ing" than have "n" as their next to last letter—even though a moment's reflection will show that this could not possibly be the case. Now, it is not exactly dumb to use the availability heuristic. Sometimes it is the best guide that we possess. Yet reliable statistical evidence will outperform the availability heuristic every time. In using data rather than professional intuitions, Beane confirmed this point.

There is an even larger puzzle. Why didn't someone like Beane come along

sooner? Why didn't baseball executives start using statistics a decade, or two decades, or three decades, earlier? Why have falsehoods and mistakes persisted? The economic stakes are extremely high, after all, and if Lewis is correct, the management of most baseball teams could have saved many millions of dollars simply by making more rational personnel decisions. Nor was the important information hard to find. James's arguments have been around for nearly two decades. In a market as competitive as major league baseball, surely the information should have been used, and fast. What went wrong?

The problem is not that baseball professionals are stupid; it is that they are human. Like most people, including experts, they tend to rely on simple rules of thumb, on traditions, on habits, on what other experts seem to believe. Even when the stakes are high, rational behavior does not always emerge. It takes time and effort to switch from simple intuitions to careful assessments of evidence. This point helps to explain why baseball owners have been slow to copy Beane's approach. But at least they are starting. The Toronto Blue Jays and the Boston Red Sox have recently hired general managers who follow Beane. And, in one of the longest-overdue moves in baseball, the new general manager of the Red Sox, just twenty-eight years old, has hired James as a consultant.

THERE ARE MANY LESSONS from this book that apply in domains far from baseball. One involves the harmful repercussions of using bad statistics. Consider the case of the "save" statistic. A save is awarded to a relief pitcher who comes in near the end of a close game with his team ahead and "saves" the win for his team. Most thoughtful observers realized long ago that this is a really dumb statistic. Why should pitching the last inning of a game have any special significance? A pitcher who comes in for the sixth inning of a tied game and pitches three scoreless innings has done something much more important than one who just pitches the ninth inning, protecting a three-run lead. Now, a dumb statistic could be harmless, but in this case, as is often true, the very fact that the number is collected and tabulated ends up influencing behavior. The existence of the save statistic (and the muddled thinking that goes along with it,

namely the idea that runs scored at the end of the game count more) seems to have altered the way teams use their relief pitchers. Statistics can do a lot better than intuitions; and relevant statistics can do a lot better than irrelevant ones, which tend to take on lives of their own.

In the past twenty years, most teams have settled on using their best relief pitcher in a specific role that has acquired a name: the closer. The closer comes in just to pitch the ninth inning in close games with his team ahead. Though this strategy is nearly universally used, it is clearly stupid. A team that is ahead by three runs going into the ninth inning has a 97 percent chance of winning the game (a percentage that has not changed since the advent of the closer). As James has argued for years, it makes more sense to use your best relief pitcher in more crucial situations, such as a tied game. Saving a three-run lead is much easier than protecting a tie, since you can give up two runs and still win the game.

What should a team do if it figures this out? One strategy would be to take your best reliever and use him more strategically, sometimes in the seventh inning of a close game with the best players of the other team due to bat, other times with a one-run lead in the ninth. This strategy would win more games, but it would not create many "saves" for the ace. Beane did this, but he also did something deviously clever: he created closers in order to sell them. As Lewis puts it: "Established closers were systematically overpriced, in large part because of the statistic by which closers were judged in the marketplace: 'saves.' The very word made the guy who achieved them seem vitally important.... You could take a slightly above average pitcher and drop him into the closer's role, let him accumulate some gaudy number of saves, and then sell him off. You could, in essence, buy a stock, pump it up with false publicity, and sell it off for much more than you paid for it."

Beane's use of relief pitchers, and his performance in general, bears on a more general problem. To what extent are the top managers in an organization—here the owners and the general managers—able to push a rational but radical change down through an organization? Beane has an owner who is sympathetic to his philosophy, but if he wants to try something new, such as using the relief ace flexibly, he has to convince the field manager to implement his strategy. He also

has to avoid a rebellion by the players. To get his manager to use the player Beane thinks is his most effective pitcher in tight situations, Beane tells the manager to think of him as "the closer before the ninth inning." A relief ace would likely complain about being used in the optimal manner, because he would accumulate fewer saves and thus would be worth less on the open market. Similarly, suppose a player takes more pitches in an attempt to draw more walks and as a result increases his on-base percentage at the cost of lowering his batting average. His team might like this trade-off, but if it lowered his value to other teams, then the player might suffer in the free-agent market.

Finally, there is the impact of the media and the fans. When James was hired by the Red Sox last winter, there was great anticipation about how the team would deal with relief pitchers. The rational strategy of using pitchers to maximize the chance of winning the game was quickly dubbed "bullpen by committee" by Boston sportswriters, who knew (from *The Book*, naturally) that this was a terrible idea. When Red Sox relievers lost the opening-day game to the woeful Tampa Devil Rays and suffered through an awful opening month, James was viewed as the villain. Of course, James does not advocate bad pitching, and, presumably with his help, the team has acquired three new relief pitchers. But, interestingly, they also seem to have designated one as their closer, perhaps deciding to let this particular battle wait for another day.

THE DIFFICULTY OF ACHIEVING sensible change in organizations is hardly special to baseball. If a new CEO comes in and wants to change how things are done, a selling job must be performed all the way down the organizational ladder. Every institution has organizational norms, ways of doing things (the in-house version of *The Book*) that are hard to overcome. The new guy is told, well, we don't do things that way here. If the CEO forces his views down the organizational ladder and his methods are unconventional, then lower-level workers may face the same dilemma as the player trying to get more walks. Do they maximize their value to the current CEO or to the outside world?

Lewis's account bears more generally on the performance of markets. He often refers to the inefficiency of the market

for player talent, as the example of the closer illustrates. If it were not for this inefficiency, Beane would not be able to procure a winning team while spending one-third as much as the Yankees and one-half as much as his division rivals. How can this market be so inefficient? Simply put, the baseball owners seem to have evolved into a "bad equilibrium." Teams have thought the same way for years, *The Book* has never been revised, and so there are massive inefficiencies that have been relatively easy for Beane to exploit. You do not need a Harvard economics graduate to realize that "a walk is as good as a hit," an expression that was around well before James started writing. Beane's key insight was exactly that this market was inefficient and could therefore be exploited. Now that Beane has succeeded, it is likely that the market for baseball-player talent will get more competitive. Still, it is embarrassing that it took so long for this to happen, especially for those who think that competitive markets always lead to a rational allocation of resources.

What does this tell us about other markets? Lewis poses this question: "If professional baseball players could be over- or undervalued, who couldn't? Bad as they may have been, the statistics used to evaluate baseball players were probably more accurate than anything used to measure the value of people who didn't play baseball for a living." Right! On the basis of first principles, the market for baseball players should be one of the most efficient labor markets on earth. It is hard to think of any high-paid profession in which performance is measured so precisely—and is publicly available to every other potential employer. Compare the market for baseball players with the market for corporate executives. A company looking for a new director of human resource management would be hard-pressed to get any objective data on the past performance of job candidates. Instead, such a company would be forced to make choices based on interviews with the candidates—a process that is even less accurate than the one the old scouts use to size up a high school player. Interviews are notoriously bad predictors of future job performance. In most contexts their predictive value is essentially zero.

The biases caused by labor markets using subjective evaluations instead of objective measures of output are potentially huge. We can glimpse the scope of the problem by studying one subjective

variable that most people would say should be irrelevant to accurate job evaluations in most positions: physical beauty. Away from places such as the back lots of Hollywood and the runways of Milan, most of us who do not look like Ben Affleck or Jennifer Lopez would like to think that successful people get where they do because of their accomplishments, not their attractiveness. Alas, it ain't so. To take one simple example, height matters. In the United States, the taller presidential candidate has usually won. And beauty matters in domains where we might not expect it to matter: law and business. In both fields, and for both sexes, career success and earnings are correlated with good looks.

And consider another problem. We have said that interviews are not useful predictors of job performance—except that once you have conducted an interview, it is almost impossible to avoid the conclusion that you have learned a lot. But the facts are clear: interviews are nearly useless at predicting anything except whether the interviewer will subsequently like the interviewee. So a rational Beane-like strategy would be to interview only employees who will work directly with you and otherwise make all decisions based on objective criteria and statistical models. Rather than conduct interviews, firms should give tests and pay more attention to grades in school (a good predictor of both intelligence and diligence, admirable traits in nearly any job). Procedures such as this also prevent discrimination, inadvertent or otherwise, based on factors such as race, gender, or beauty. Major symphony orchestras have found that if they conduct auditions with the candidates hidden behind a screen, more women are hired. And when employees are hired, firms should seek objective measures of performance, which distinguish luck from skill.

Some enlightened firms are already taking steps along these lines. Many more should be doing so. We suspect that countless areas of enterprise, both private and governmental, would benefit from their own Billy Beanes and Paul DePodestas, challenging widespread intuitions, or what "everyone knows," with statistical information about what works and what does not, and with performance measures that more accurately reflect the true contribution to organizational success. Baseball is not the only realm for which *The Book* is in need of revision. ■

David Hajdu

Ain't No Mountain

MOTOWN:
MUSIC, MONEY, SEX, AND POWER
By Gerald Posner
(Random House, 350 pp., \$24.95)

BOOGALOO: THE QUINTESSENCE
OF AMERICAN POPULAR MUSIC
By Arthur Kempton
(Pantheon, 498 pp., \$27.50)

A FEW YEARS AGO, DURING A visit to Washington, D.C., I was clicking the scan button on a hotel clock radio and stopped when I heard a talk jockey on a local black station. He was in the midst of a good rant. "What's wrong with the white man?" he implored, sounding more perplexed than ireful. (I can still recall his voice and most of his monologue, such was its cogency.) "Why is the white man so behind the times? All the white people today are listening to *Motown*—they just love Motown! Black people haven't listened to Motown in thirty years! What's wrong with the white man? I want to know!"

Some four decades after Berry Gordy Jr. launched his flotilla of record labels, collectively known by the name of their flagship, Motown remains a ghostly presence on the pop-culture horizon. The Motown companies produced 357 hit singles between 1960 and 1970, and, thanks to the consolidation of radio stations and the rise of poll-based, computerized programming, the old Motown hits remain in perpetual rotation on innumerable sound-alike oldies stations preying on boomer nostalgia. I would not have had to strain my clicking finger had I wanted to hear Marvin Gaye's "I Heard It Through the Grapevine" or the Temptations' "Ain't Too Proud to Beg." Meanwhile, Motown Records, now part of the Universal Music Group, keeps the mall chains stocked with CDs of recordings

from its vaults, resourcefully packaged as all sorts of compilations and re-issues marketed under the banner of "Classic Motown," while advertising agencies mine the same material to raise the Q value of raisins and hair dyes. In 1997, when Gordy decided to sell a partial interest in his publishing holdings (which included virtually everything Motown had ever recorded), the songs were earning him approximately \$20 million per year; a consortium of British investors paid \$132 million for the right to split whatever the vintage music would earn in the future. The transaction was clearly predicated on faith that a great many people—white, black, and otherwise—will love Motown for some time.

How did Gordy, a self-taught songwriter whose only prior business experience was as the proprietor of a failed jazz-record store, turn a family shop operating out of a clapboard house into the best-known and most prosperous black-owned enterprise in American history? Why did such a wealth of musical invention abruptly emerge from Detroit, which had rarely been thought of as a nidus of artistic creation? What was it about those Motown records that carried them across lines of race and class? Was it all just a '60s thing? A few dozen books (as well as several films) have dealt with Motown as a business and cultural phenomenon, an object of nostalgia, and a wellspring of celebrity gossip, including Gordy's sanctimonious autobiography, *To Be Loved: The Music, the Magic, the Memories of Motown*, which appeared in 1994; the journalist Nelson George's *Where Did Our Love Go?: The Rise & Fall of the Motown Sound*, from 1985, a responsible early history of the label; and chatty ghosted memoirs by Martha Reeves, Smokey Robinson, and other Motown artists. Now Gerald Posner's and Arthur Kempton's books bring clarity (Posner's strength) and insight (Kempton's) to the subject, suggesting a couple of answers to that radio jockey's question.

Posner, a former Wall Street lawyer who has written (or co-written) eight books since 1988, specializes in investigative journalism on thorny socio-

political topics such as the Josef Mengele case, the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., and the Chinese mafia. He and his research assistants are dogged, and he presents their findings with brisk lucidity and the slightly impudent air of certainty that is native to litigators. I have always respected *Case Closed* for challenging the ranks of Kennedy conspiracy zealots, one of whom has countered Posner with a book refuting his conclusions, called *Case Open*. (I am hopeful that Posner will respond with another book, *Case Closed Again: Nyah Nyah Nyah*.) He had never written a book about the arts until *Motown*, which, as he explains in the first sentence of the acknowledgments, he did at the suggestion of a writer friend "whose book about CBS Records ... was a bestseller." It was the "cast of characters," more than the music, that inspired Posner to take on the subject, he says; but he is terse and restrained in his portraits of Gordy, the street-savvy megalomaniac who commissioned a portrait of himself outfitted as Napoleon for his mansion; and Diana Ross, a teenage monster from the housing projects whom Gordy molded in the image of a "black Barbra Streisand"; and Gordy's omnipresent parents and siblings, who ran their ever-extending family like a business and vice versa; and the gifted musicians whom Gordy managed like factory hands—Reeves, Robinson, Gaye, Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson, and dozens more.

In Posner's account, Berry Gordy Jr. outperformed the white record companies by using their own formula, flipped backward. The pooh-bahs of mainstream American show business had known since the age of minstrelsy that there is money to be made when a white person performs in a black style; thus were enthroned Benny Goodman, the "King of Swing," and his heir in the rock 'n' roll era, Elvis Presley. "Gordy," Posner writes, "was determined to discover whether a black artist, singing a white-sounding pop song, could cross over." (There were precedents for this experiment, of course: among the most notable were Paul Robeson, Nat King Cole in his pop phase, and Johnny Mathis.) Gordy took this proposition so far as to try to restrict his most commercial acts—Diana Ross and the Supremes, the Jackson Five—from identification with the black world. "Gordy did not want the Jacksons to alienate their enormous white following

David Hajdu teaches at New School University and is the author of *POSITIVELY 4TH STREET: THE LIVES AND TIMES OF JOAN BAEZ, BOB DYLAN, MIMI BAEZ FARIÑA, AND RICHARD FARIÑA* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux).

by coming across as too black," Posner writes, quoting Gordy instructing a publicist: "Listen, Diana Ross didn't become a star by being black. As far as I'm concerned, the Jackson Five aren't black either. So let's have none of that black stuff." Gordy licensed the images of the Supremes to Michigan's Schafer Bakeries for reproduction on packages of white bread.

As I see Gordy's point of view, however, it was at least partly an expression of racial defiance, rather than pure sublimation. My blackness is not self-limiting, he was saying; I can compete as an equal with anyone. Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington, both of whom suffered charges of Uncle Tomism from civil rights advocates, likewise protested racism in the eloquence of their unspoken presumption of equality. In a television interview in the 1960s, Ellington was asked if he considered himself a spokesman for his people. "My people?" Ellington responded, ruminating on the question for moment. "My people ... are *the* people." Like Armstrong's "Heebie Jeebies" and Ellington's "Reminiscing in Tempo," the Jackson Five's "ABC" was obviously black music, and Gordy knew it. He denied the reductivism of classification. "Pop means popular," Posner quotes him as saying. "I never gave a damn what else it was called." To Gordy, Motown's public ... was *the* public.

Posner, not surprisingly, is adept at unraveling the arabesque of suits and countersuits that proliferated once the youngsters whom Gordy had liberated from the ghettos grew up, learned something about the world outside the Motown building, and recognized the liabilities of their boss's paternalistic benevolence. To be discovered and signed by Motown was a kind of glamorous vassalage, with the label serving as every artist's manager, booking agent, record company, and even personal groomer—multiple conflicts of interest unthinkable today and unacceptable in many corners of show business long before Gordy set up shop. For years, Gordy required all Motown songwriters to relinquish their copyrights to his company, Jobete Music Publishing, and declined to provide accounting statements to composers, musicians, or singers. Rather than submit his books to outside scrutiny, Gordy refused to join the trade association that commemorates best-sellerdom with gold and platinum disks, and as a result none of the million-selling

Motown hits of the 1960s was certified as such. The "gold records" that Gordy hung in the Motown offices were spray-painted and framed by his staff. As a Motown executive told Posner, "He didn't know when to stop treating people like kids." The late Marvin Gaye, quoted in Posner's book, called Motown a "loving Gestapo."

Motown lacks where *Boogaloo* abounds—in cultural criticism and analysis. Posner tells us a good deal about the internal machinery of Motown, but little about how it influenced other musicians and the young people who were listening to those millions of records. We get a closeup view of the Supremes performing at the Copacabana in New York City, but we are left to ponder what it meant for three poor black girls from Detroit to tread into that realm of middle-class white showbiz. (Kempton, in a thorough section on Sam Cooke's venture into the same domain, does a good job of evoking the Copa's hallowed vapidness.) Posner adheres to the same writing principle that Gordy instilled in his lyricists: tell a simple story in as few words as possible. Unfortunately, Posner's language has not been set to a groove by the Funk Brothers, Motown's driving house band. In striving to keep his writing lean, Posner undernourishes it. "[Gordy] could not ignore the popularity of R&B," he notes. "Even staid *Billboard*, the industry's bible, devoted an entire issue to R&B in 1954." True enough—because, in a fact that would have been worth mentioning, unprecedented numbers of free-spending young white people had recently discovered the music.

Although he defends his lack of musical expertise as irrelevant to his main objectives of narrative and portraiture, Posner leaves so many musical holes and makes so many descriptive and critical missteps that the text has to dance like Merce Cunningham, distracting the reader from the story and the characters. After several evocative paragraphs on the Supremes' personalities, we get scant generalities about their music, plus the facts of its seemingly miraculous success in the marketplace. Elsewhere Posner notes that Motown's records were "often astonishingly innovative" without explaining those innovations in adequate detail; we are left astonished only by the author's statement. He refers to the virtuoso jazz singer Sarah Vaughan as a "blues vocalist"; and he diminishes the most esteemed jazz orchestra in the music's his-

tory as Duke Ellington's "outfit"; and (presumably with the worthy intention of avoiding musical jargon) he makes up his own awkward terms or repeats those of the uninformed, such as "arrangement sheets" and "chord sheets." In short, there is not enough music in *Motown*, and what music there is does not seem terribly important. Neither was the case at Motown during the 1960s.

ARTHUR KEMPTON'S BOOK IS far more musical, interpretive, and vexing. Ambitious in scope and design, the book depicts the history of African American popular music in a collage of character studies and narrative scenes, varied but related. Kempton has listened broadly and well, understands business, and has watched television, much to the benefit of his book. He begins his text neatly with Thomas A. Dorsey, the embodiment of musical duality, who, early in the twentieth century, composed bawdy, gut-bucket blues such as "It's Tight Like That" and "It's All Wore Out," as well as dozens of elegiac gospel standards, including "Precious Lord" and "If You See My Savior." Dorsey leads us to Mahalia Jackson, who takes us to Sam Cooke (originally Sam Cook of the gospel group the Soul Stirrers), who gets us to Motown, where we linger. Later we move along to Stax Records, then to George Clinton and P-Funk, and eventually to Suge Knight, with occasional detours; and Berry Gordy and Motown pop in and out.

Kempton nimbly traces the entwined threads of the sacred, the profane, and the mercantile in American music. In the three years between 1925 and 1928, he tells us, there were 750 spoken-language records of sermons released on 78-rpm singles—in their dizzying, rhythmic language, they were the precursors to rap. Sam Cook, Kempton points out, gave the Soul Stirrers sex appeal, while Sam Cooke was acceptable to the parents of his white teenage fans because of his demure choirboy charm.

Kempton is especially good at following the mercurial flow of money in the pop-music trade. "No one in Berry Gordy's business had ever produced quality in such quantity," he writes. "The industrial average of hits to misses was less than 20 percent; more than three-quarters of all the records on the market failed to recoup what they cost to make." In a book dealing with Gordy, such matters as cash flow are significant. After all, Motown's

first major hit was "Money (That's What I Want)," a song that the company president himself composed. Posner quotes Gordy as explaining, "There is no more complete and meaningful message than that." Indeed, Gordy's conception of quality (informed by his early experience on the Detroit assembly lines) was inseparable from quality: if it sold, it was good. Commerce was not something antithetical to or otherwise separate from Gordy's art; money was his aesthetic.

Boogaloo contains some keen observations, nicely expressed. "Public sacrifice of the private self is one of the endlessly undone chores of a despised tribe," Kempton writes on the subject of a black gospel singer calibrating her performance for a white audience. In describing Sam Cooke, he notes "a little shyness veiling the quiet arrogance that is the inner grace of the truly gifted, flickers of temperament suggestive of restless depths, and a mama's boy's good manners [which] made him catnip to high school girls." At other points, however, Kempton (like Smokey Robinson in his youth) seems a bit too enchanted with his own voice. He has a weakness for alliteration ("young people whose susceptibility to suggestible consumption made larger and livelier the marketplace in which their appetites were stimulated and satisfied") and a near obsession with botanical and epicurean metaphors (Sam Cooke "pluck[ed] off women as if they were hanging fruit"; Seattle was "so detached from the rest of Aframerica that it was like a gnat in a bowl of grits"; "For Stax, the summer of 1967 was hot as fish grease."

Kempton has taken his conceit of literary collage too far; his book's cut-and-paste quality is sometimes addling. We encounter the term "jubilee style" on page twenty-eight and find it defined forty-seven pages later. Anecdotes such as how the Motown songwriting team of Holland, Dozier, and Holland wrote and produced the Four Tops' hit "Same Old Song" in a competitive heat and quotes such as the singer Julius Cheeks's recollection of how Cooke gave him "the first five-hundred dollar bill [he] ever saw" are repeated. More frustrating, we get no more than a few references to "boogaloo"—one in the Acknowledgments, equating the term with "what was [nearly forty years ago] called 'soul music,'" another on page 323 defining it in parentheses as "black popular music"—until page 385. There Kempton offers a brief

The Moons of Earth

Earth, despite all the astronomers say, has not one moon but many. All save the one called the Moon are inhabited, all have distinctive, frankly fantastical climates and landscapes. Initiates know this, meteorologists, farmers, sportsmen and almanac keepers know what was once, in the antediluvian world, common knowledge. They have conspired for six thousand years, now, to keep it a secret, fearing that we, if we knew of inhabited worlds in near orbit, might be so taken with them we'd neglect our terrestrial business. And they are right. Having unearthed their secret I've found myself growing arrogant, distant, bored with the everyday details of living, pale and exhausted from gazing all night at the heavens. Oh stranger, stranger whom I, both by chance and design, entrust with the secret, do not take lightly my warning; do not believe for a moment you can believe in such things without gradually growing inhuman. Think of the Harvest Moon, patchworked with wheatfields, orchards and vineyards; think of the Hunter's Moon, teeming with prey unafraid of the arrow; think of the Hunger Moon, peopled by figures from Giacometti; think of the Flower Moon, the Ice Moon, the Strawberry Moon and the others. You, if you ever return to your life, will return as a stranger.

BILL COYLE

section explaining that the boogaloo was a dance fad for less than a year during the 1960s. "Some who witnessed [the era] have recalled the latter mid-1960s as the 'days of the boogaloo and shing-a-ling,'" he notes.

But when did the word "boogaloo" come into common usage as a synonym for African American popular music? Never, as far as I know. The last time I remember hearing it, it was in the title of a song by Ringo Starr ("Back Off Boogaloo") in 1972. One could argue a case for applying other artifacts of dance lingo so sweepingly: "boogie" has long-standing credence in black popular music, and so does "funk." Boogaloo has scarcely been used more broadly than "shing-a-ling" or "watusi." There is something discomfiting in Kempton's decision to bestow a name of his liking upon an art form of another people's culture now that he is writing about it, like an anthropologist renaming an ages-old society because he has come along and made a study of it.

Posner and Kempton both under-value the role of dance in the history of black music—and in the youth culture of America as a whole. In a passage on the lyrics of Motown songs, Kempton notes that the label's songwriters "were contributors of brilliant fragments, memorable for the occasional sparkling of an amateur gift; a resonant line or artful

phrase; an intact metaphor standing starkly amid narrative rubble; a precisely realized emotional intention; a flash of poetic insight." The fact is that in the social dance music that Motown was in the business of creating, to engage the mind more fully would be to fail. The Motown songwriters understood the primacy of the groove, and they subordinated every other element of their compositions, the lyrics included, to its service. The words needed to be only nominally poetic and mildly engaging, lest the brain interrupt the body. (The second great hit that Gordy wrote for Motown was an irresistible everybody-on-the-floor number whose chorus chanted, "Do you love me—now that I can dance?")

Much of our ongoing affection for Motown is no doubt associative. Gordy customized his music to the specifications of transistor radios and portable 45-rpm record players, and the sound of Martha and the Vandellas' "Dancing in the Street" and Mary Wells's "My Guy" returns us to our first loves, to the summer beaches and block parties of our memories—or, more likely, our fantasies. Therein lies the secret of Motown's appeal, I suspect. It is black music by provenance and white music by appropriation, but elementally it is neither. It is the music of our collective idealized American youth, an art of myth. ■

WASHINGTON DIARIST

Zombies

NOT LONG AGO IN THESE pages, I politely suggested that Democrats would have to be out of their gourds to nominate Howard Dean for president. Some Democratic strategists have made this case as well. The gist of the anti-Dean argument is this: President Bush maintains substantial popularity despite his plutocratic policies by cultivating an image of moral conviction and foreign policy toughness. Therefore, the ideal strategy to defeat the president is *not* to put up an opponent who became controversial even in Vermont for his association with gay civil unions, whose central foreign policy platform is to “tear up the Bush doctrine,” and who has been known to yell to audiences, “I don’t want to listen to fundamentalist preachers anymore!” But, while these attributes may alienate the red-state voters Democrats need in 2004, they seem perfectly innocuous to many political reporters. And so the Dean campaign has been treated to headlines such as “DEFYING LABELS LEFT OR RIGHT, DEAN’S ‘04 RUN IS MAKING GAINS” (*The New York Times*) and “AS GOVERNOR, DEAN WAS FISCAL CONSERVATIVE” (*The Washington Post*) rather than something along the lines of “OBSCURE EX-GOVERNOR OF TINY STATE LEADING PARTY TO CATASTROPHE, EXPERTS WARN.” The closest thing to skepticism has come from *Newsweek* magazine, whose August 11 cover headline read, “HOWARD DEAN: DESTINY OR DISASTER?” (Is it really an either/or situation?) Every day, it seems, somebody else—each more unexpected than the last—declares their conversion to the cause. I feel like I’m in some kind of zombie horror movie. Last week, a colleague—one with whom I nearly always agree on such questions—wandered into my office and said something nice about Dean. I clutched the sides of my head and screamed, “Nooooo!”

THE LATEST VACANT-EYED DEAN ZOMBIE to come lurching forth, arms outstretched, is the normally sensible *Wall Street Journal* columnist and CNN pundit Al Hunt. In a recent column, Hunt perfunctorily dismissed the arguments against Dean. “His opposition to the war

certainly isn’t lethal,” Hunt maintained. “[N]o one says that Bob Graham would be doomed by his antiwar position.” Perhaps no one says this because no one thinks Graham will win the Democratic nomination. But never mind that. Hunt sees something corrupt in the anti-Dean phenomenon — “a battle more intrinsic to presidential politics than ideological struggles: outsiders versus insiders, insurrectionists versus the establishment.” In Hunt’s mind, the Democratic Leadership Council’s (DLC) opposition to Dean has nothing to do with philosophy or even political calculation. “When Al From, the longtime chief of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council, blasts the front running insurgent, it’s less about ideology than power. After Bill Clinton and Al Gore, From fancies himself a kingmaker, and Dr. Dean hasn’t supped sufficiently at his table.”

IN FACT, THE DLC DISTANCED ITSELF from Gore beginning in August of 2000, when he lurched left, and disowned him outright a few months after the election. But what makes Hunt’s anti-establishment indignation comic is that few people in Washington have supped at as many tables as Hunt. He is a regular on the society pages, which chronicle his appearances at state dinners, parties at Pamela Harriman’s house, and status events, such as the wedding of Alan Greenspan and Andrea Mitchell (who, a *Washingtonian* magazine reporter divulged, is godmother to Hunt’s daughter). Hunt belongs to the comically self-important Gridiron Club—an elite social club for journalists—and, along with his wife, CNN host Judy Woodruff, has been identified by *Washingtonian* magazine as a member of the city’s social “A-list.” Hunt salts his columns and TV punditry with references to his many important friendships. He passionately defended “his good friend” Vernon Jordan: “I’ve known Vernon Jordan for almost 20 years. He’s a friend. . . . Would he have told [Monica Lewinsky] to commit perjury? I just find that impossible to believe.” In one column, he fondly recalled, “Dinner parties at [Post publisher Katherine Graham’s] Georgetown estate were

unique, populated by the politically-powerful, corporate chieftains, literary lions and journalistic pooch-bahs.” Outsider or insider? Insurrectionist or establishment? You be the judge.

DEAN’S ADMIRERS ARE RIGHT ABOUT one thing: By harnessing the power of the Internet, where Dean has raised millions of dollars, his campaign has empowered grassroots activists. And among liberals that has spawned a new theory: The Internet will do for the left what talk radio did for the right. “It may turn out the liberal answer to Rush [Limbaugh] wasn’t an alternative talker, but the mouse, the keypad and the browser,” writes *Los Angeles Times* columnist Ron Brownstein. It’s comforting to think that, even if Dean doesn’t win, he will have unleashed long-term forces that help liberals and Democrats even the playing field. But it is probably not true. After all, talk radio is top-down. It’s a medium for Republicans to disseminate the party line among their base. (Limbaugh occasionally denies that he is a partisan tool. In a 1995 *Frontline* documentary, he asserted, “The press continues to report that dittoheads are simply mind-numbed robots waiting for marching orders every day issued by me. And that’s not true,” only to be seen in a later clip bellowing, “We’ll be back with marching orders next!”) The Internet, on the other hand, is bottom-up: It allows activists to help determine their party’s course by, say, funneling huge sums of cash to their candidate of choice. The trouble is that grassroots activists’ political calculations tend to be somewhat suspect. In 1999, for instance, GOP true-believers were falling for Alan Keyes, not George W. Bush. It fell to organs like talk radio to whip the base into line behind Bush, allowing him to craft a winning, centrist-sounding message. This year, by contrast, the group MoveOn.org enabled its audience to vote in an online “primary.” The two leading candidates were Dean and ultra-lefty Dennis Kucinich. This may be more democratic than a top-down mandate from party elders, but it’s also a good way to choose a nominee who has no chance of winning. Putting disproportionate power in the hands of impassioned political minorities, in other words, isn’t necessarily the best thing for the Democratic Party. It may even be worse than putting disproportionate power in the hands of the Georgetown dinner-party set.

JONATHAN CHAIT



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